

THE HIPPODROME

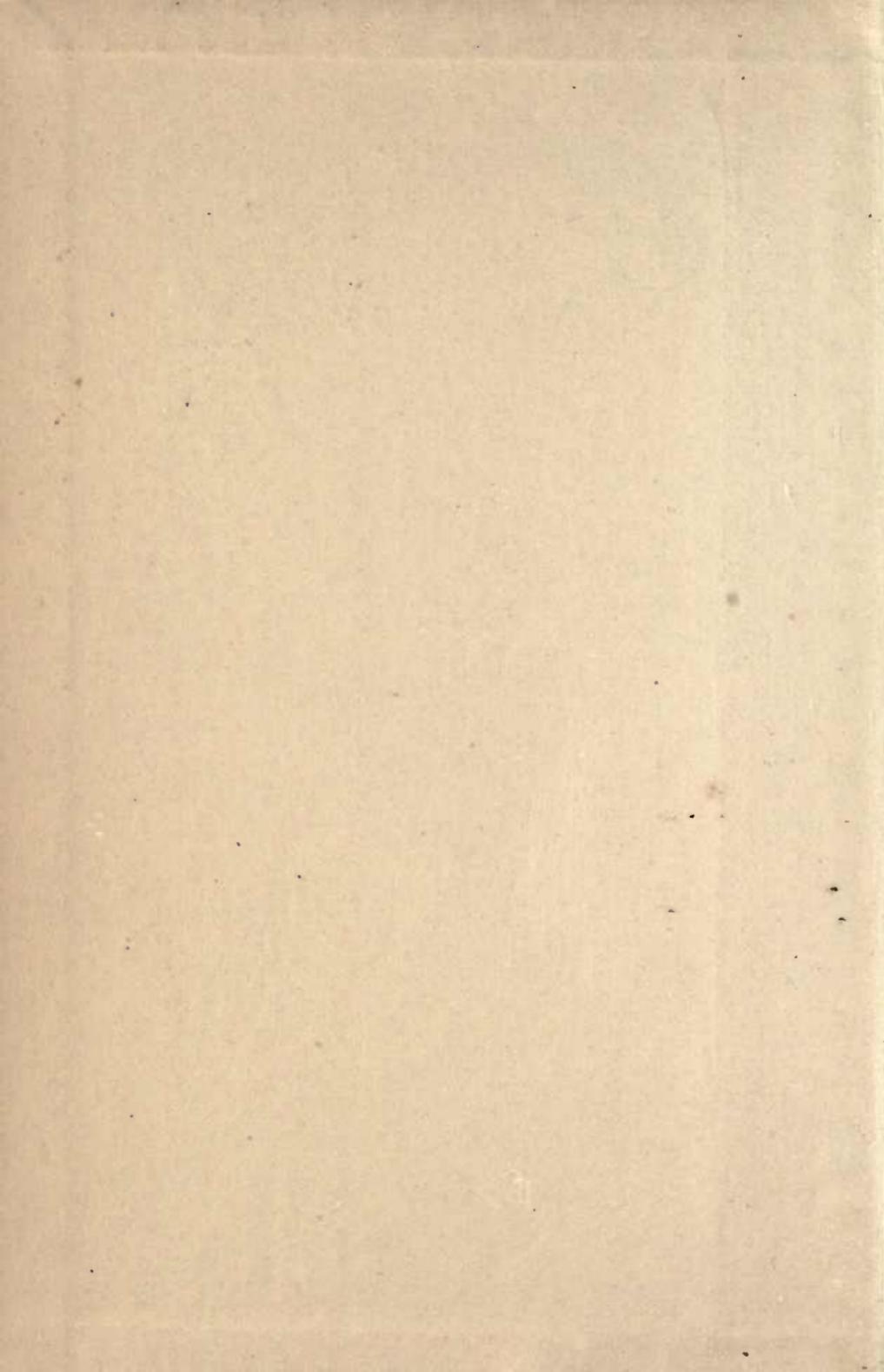
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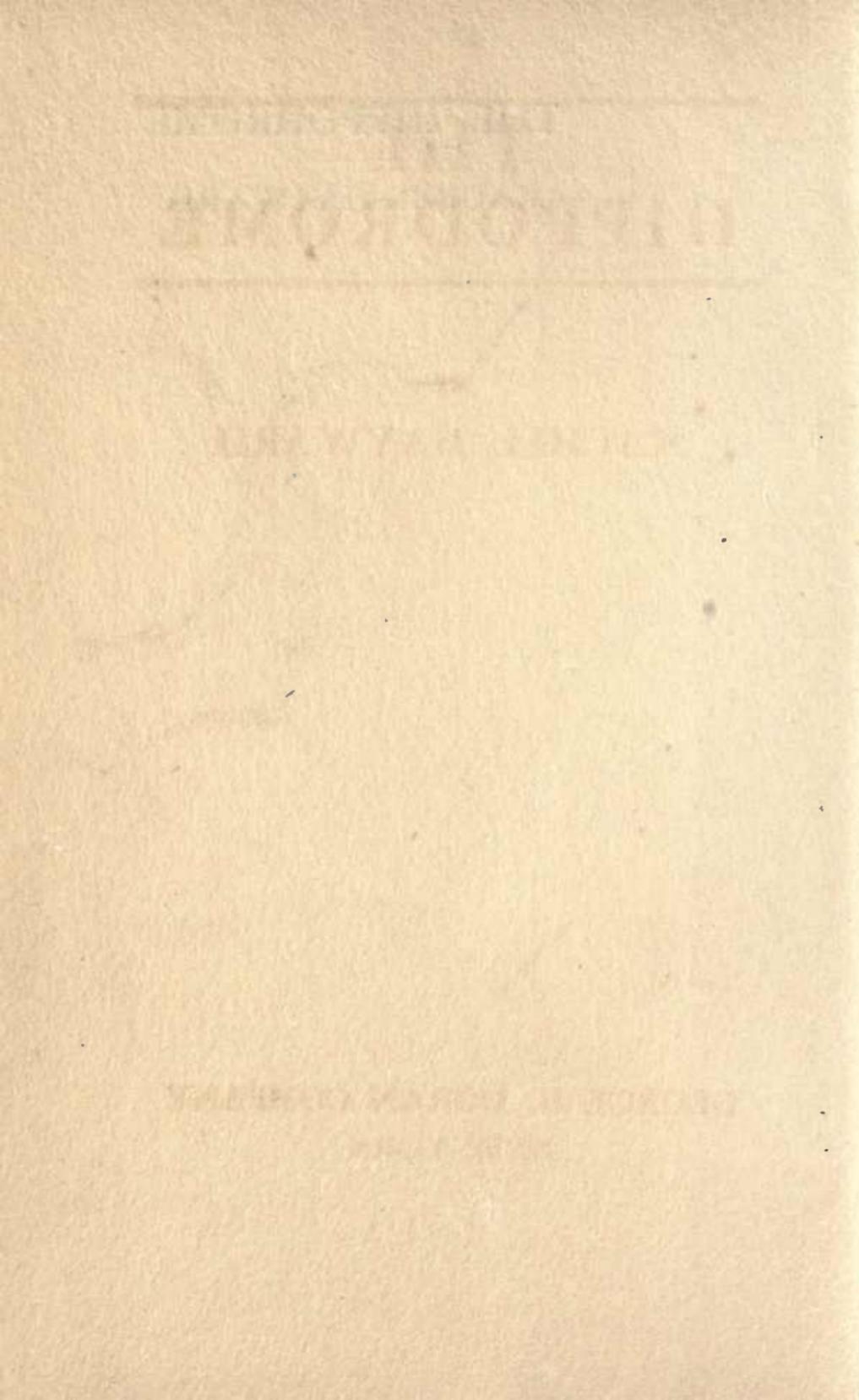


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THE HIPPODROME

RACHEL HAYWARD



THE HIPPODROME

BY
RACHEL HAYWARD

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NEW YORK

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TO
EDYTH AND ARTHUR APPLIN
WITH LOVE AND HOMAGE.

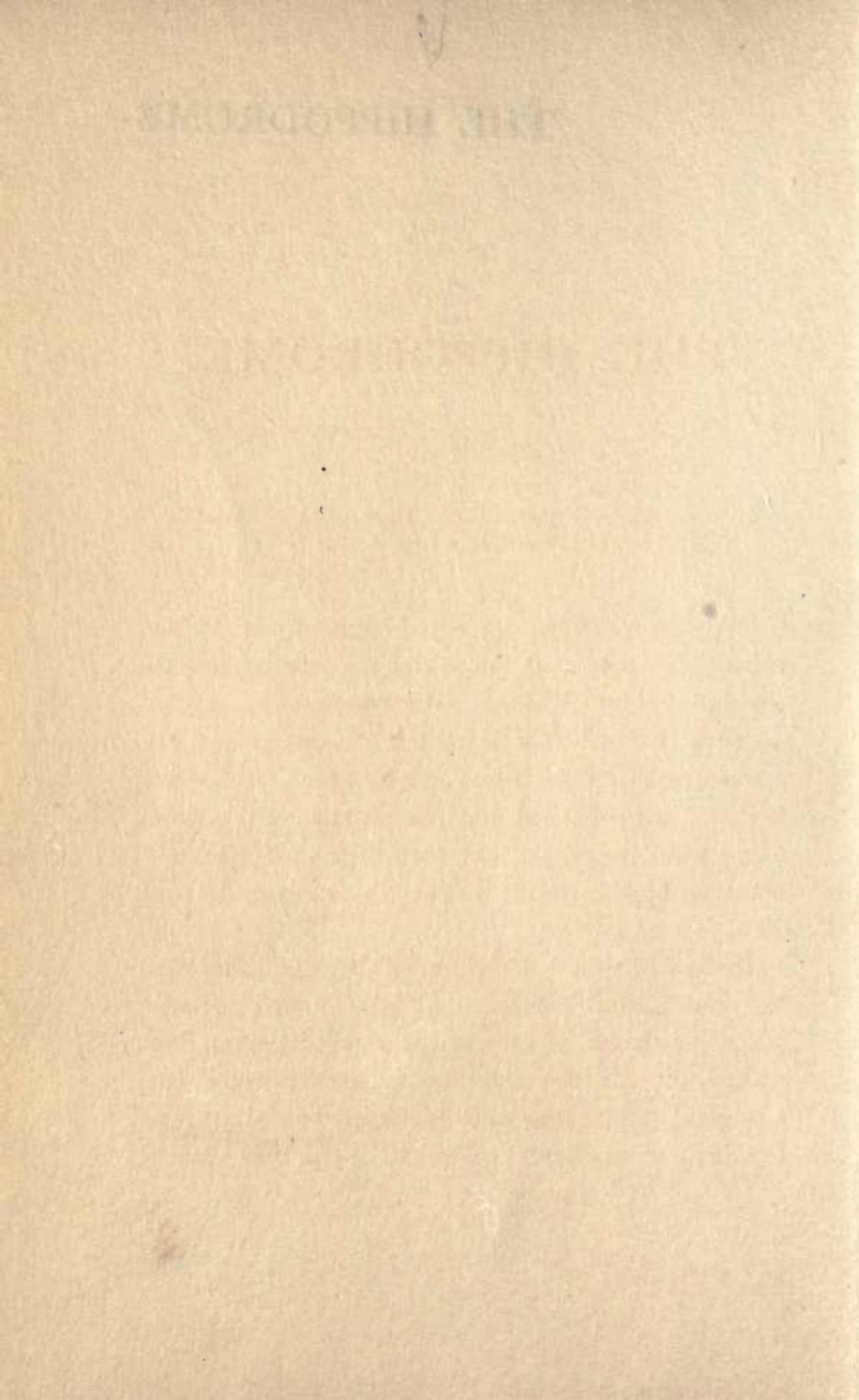
“Car vois-tu chaque jour je t'aime davantage,
Aujourd 'hui plus qu 'hier, et bien moins que demain.”
(*Rosemonde Rostand*)

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THE HIPPODROME





THE HIPPODROME

CHAPTER I

“Aujourd’hui le printemps, Ninon, demain l’hiver.
Quoi ! tu nas pas l’étoile, est tu vas sur la mer !”

DE MUSSET.

COUNT EMILE POLESKI was obliged to be at the Barcelona Station at five o’clock in the afternoon one hot Friday in May. His business, having to do with that which was known to himself and his associates as “the Cause,” necessitated careful attention, and required the performance of certain manœuvres in such a way that they should be unobserved by the various detectives to whom he was an object of interest.

He looked round, scowling, till he found the man he wanted, and who was to all outward appearances the driver of one of the row of *fiacres* that waited outside the station. Cigarettes were exchanged, and a tiny slip of paper passed imperceptibly from hand to hand, then he turned

ostensibly to watch the incoming train from Port-Bou. As he was on the platform it would be better to look as if he had come to meet someone, and as he had nothing particular to do just then it would make a distraction to watch the various types of humanity arriving at this continental Buenos Ayres, the city of romance, anarchy, commerce and varied vices.

Emile Poleski called it *l'entresol de l'enfer*, and certainly he was not there by his own choice. It was the centre of intrigue, and to intrigue his life, intellect, and the little money he had left from his Polish estates, were devoted. To him life meant "The Cause," and that exigeant mistress left little room for other and more natural affections.

In his career women did not count, at least they did not count as women. If they had money to spend, or brains and energies that could be utilised, that was a different matter. He had a trick of studying people as one studies natural history through a microscope.

It was all very interesting, but when one had done with the specimens one threw them away and looked about for fresh material.

The train came in, slackened speed and stopped, and its contents resolved themselves into little groups of people all hunting with more or less ex-

citement for their luggage, and porters to convey the same to cabs.

The figure of a girl who had just alighted and was standing alone, caught and held his roving eyes. The pose of her abnormally slim body had all the grace of a figure on a Grecian vase in its clean curves and easy balance.

Her head was beautifully set upon a long throat, and her feet were conspicuously slender and delicate in their high French boots of champagne-coloured kid. Her face, which as far as he could see was of a startling pallor, was obscured by a white lace veil tied loosely round her Panama hat, and left to fall down her back in floating ends; and she wore a rather crumpled, cream-coloured dress.

She stood, looking round, as if uncertain how to act, evidently in expectation of someone to meet her. No one appeared and she moved off in search of a porter. Emile followed at a reasonable distance. Books he found desperately dull, but humanity in any shape or form was attractive to him, and the girl's appearance appealed to a deeply embedded love of the exotic and mysterious.

He watched with cynical amusement as she tried to explain her wishes in French to a porter, who spoke only the dialect of Catalonia. Her voice finally decided Emile on his line of conduct. Low-

pitched it was, with subtle inflections, and with a hoarseness in the lower notes such as one hears in the voices of Jewish women.

A woman, whose vocal notes were of that enchanting *timbre*, was likely to prove interesting.

He advanced a few steps nearer, saying in French, "I speak the language. Can I be of any use?"

The girl turned, giving him a comprehensive glance, and bowed slightly in acknowledgment.

"Many thanks, *Monsieur!* I know scarcely any Spanish. Perhaps you would tell me where one could get lodgings. It seems rather hopeless for this man and myself to continue arguing in different languages, so if you would not mind —"

When they were both in the *fiacre* she did not speak, but leaned back, her hands in her lap, her feet crossed, looking straight in front of her with hazel-green eyes, expressionless as those of the Sphinx. Count Poleski congratulated himself in silence over his discovery. Here was a woman so unique that she asked no questions, did not volunteer after the manner of most women a flood of voluble information, apparently took everything for granted, and was in no way embarrassed by himself or his company.

In some respects she appeared a young girl, but her composure was certainly not youthful.

"So you're out from England," he said at last.

"From Paris," she answered him serenely. "I'm Arithelli of the Hippodrome." There was a girlish pride in her accents, and she looked at him sideways to observe the effect of her announcement.

"*Ma foi!* So it's that, is it? Then I've heard something about you. I know the Manager pretty well. He said you were *un peu bizarre*."

"*Peut être plus qu'un peu*," Arithelli retorted quickly. "I see you think he's right."

Arrived at the lodgings she sat still, waiting in the cab with the same apparent indifference while Emile wrangled with the landlady. At length he came back to her: "You had better try these for a week," he said. "They're forty *pesetas*. She will want the rent in advance as you have no recommendation." For the first time Arithelli seemed disturbed.

"I'm afraid I can't pay it. I'm to have five pounds a week at the Hippodrome, but of course I can't ask for that in advance. I had a second-class ticket out here, and now I've only got four-and-sixpence left."

She held out a small blue satin bag, displaying a few coins. "Perhaps I'd better go and explain to the Manager." Emile shrugged his shoulders. Obviously the girl was very young.

"On the whole I think you'd better not," he said. "You know nothing about either myself or the Manager, and it seems you've got to trust one of us so it may as well be me."

When he had arranged matters he departed, saying casually, "I'll come in again to-night about nine o'clock to see how you are getting on. Don't do anything insane, such as wandering about the streets, because you feel dull. It won't hurt you to put up with the dulness for a bit. You'll have plenty of excitement if you're going to live in Barcelona."

"*Tiens!*" said Arithelli to herself. "What manners and what dirty nails! *C'est un homme épouvantable*, but very useful. But for him I should have been prancing round this place all night, looking for rooms."

She dragged her trunk towards her, and proceeded to unpack the collection of gaudy dresses that she had bought with so much pride at the *Bon Marché* in Paris, and which were all in the worst possible taste.

Perhaps she had been impelled to a choice of

lively colours as being symbolical in their brightness of the new life on which she was about to embark. There was a green cloth rendered still more hideous by being inlet with medallions of pink silk, a cornflower blue with much silver braid already becoming tarnished in the few times it had been worn, and a mauve and orange adorned with flamboyant Eastern embroidery.

When she had tumbled them all out they showed a vivid patch of ill-assorted tints. Arithelli shivered as she sat back on her heels on the floor, and looked round the sordid room. The excitement of her arrival had worn off, and the element of depression reigned supreme in her mind. Certainly the apartment, which was supposed to be a bed-sitting-room, but which was merely a bedroom, was not enlivening to contemplate. No carpet, dirty boards, a large four-poster bed canopied with faded draperies against the wall facing the window. There was a feeble attempt at a washstand in a small alcove on the left, furnished with the usual doll's house crockery affected on the Continent,—no wardrobe and no dressing table.

It all looked hopeless, she told herself disgustedly. Surely there were better rooms to be found in Barcelona for forty *pesetas* a week! Either lodgings must be very dear or else Emile Poleski had meant

to take a large commission for his trouble in finding them!

She was stiff and tired after the long journey and want of proper food, and every trifle took upon itself huge dimensions. She was daintily fastidious as to cleanliness, and everything seemed to her filthy beyond belief. The universal squalor customary in Spanish life had come as an unpleasant shock.

When she started from Paris she had conjured visions of a triumphal entry into her new career. Now she felt rather frightened and desperately lonely, and the horrible room appeared like a bad omen for the future. But, she reflected, after all, things might have been worse. She had found one friend already. Certainly he had disagreeable manners, especially after the artificial and invariable politeness of the Frenchmen she had met while travelling, but at least he promised to be useful. She picked herself up off the floor and began to consider the disposal of her garments. Three or four wooden pegs, the only accommodation to be seen, were obviously not sufficient to hold all her clothes.

Presently there was an interlude, provided by the advent of the landlady. Her dishevelment accorded well with the general look of the house;

her slippers clicked on the carpetless boards at every shuffling step, and she carried a half-cold, slopped-over cup of coffee. To Arithelli's relief the woman was mistress of a limited amount of French *patois*, and in answer to a demand for a wardrobe of some kind, said she would send up her son. He was a carpenter and would doubtless arrange something. She gave a curious glance at the girl's witch-like beauty, a mixture of suspicion and barely-admitted pity in her thoughts.

As to Emile's share in the drama she had naturally formed conclusions. After a respectable interval her son arrived, and having delivered himself of a remark in Spanish and being answered in French, proceeded to hammer a row of enormous nails into the wall at regular intervals. Arithelli sat upon her trunk, which she considered cleaner than the chairs, and watched the process, her green eyes assuming a curious veiled expression, a hank of copper-tinted hair falling upon her shoulders.

There was something uncanny in her capacity for keeping still, and she had none of the usual and natural fidgetiness of a young girl. In whatever position of sitting or standing she found herself she was capable of remaining for an indefinite period.

When the carpenter's manipulations had ceased she hung up her dresses carefully, put the rest of

her things back into the trunk, as being the safest place, and sitting down again began to cry in a low, painful way, utterly unlike the light April shower emotion of the ordinary woman.

Here she was in Barcelona, and the fulfilled desire seemed likely to become already Dead Sea fruit. Supposing she got ill, or failed to satisfy the audience. She would see her name to-morrow when she went out in large letters on the posters of the Hippodrome:

“Arithelli, the beautiful English equestrienne,” and underneath some appalling picture of herself in columbine skirts, or jockey’s silk jacket and cap and top boots.

She had been crazy with delight over her success in getting the engagement from the manager in Paris, and it had not occurred to her that her appearance had had a great deal to do with her having been accepted. She had signed a contract for a year; and looking forward a year seemed a very long time. There had been opposition at home.

Her father had said, “I don’t approve, but at the same time I don’t know in the least what else you can do. It’s Hobson’s choice. You can ride, and you’ve got looks of the sort to take in a public career.”

Her mother had been frankly brutal. Now that

there was no money, she said, she could not have three great girls at home doing nothing. She had given them all a good education and they must try and make some use of it. Neither of the younger sisters, Isobel and Valérie, were old enough to do anything for themselves, so Arithelli at the age of twenty-four had taken her courage, which was the indomitable courage of her race, in both hands, and launched herself on the world. The bare-backed riding of her early days in Galway had proved a valuable asset, and there was not a horse she could not manage.

Her slim figure seemed born to the saddle, and her nerve was as yet unshaken.

The man who had engaged her had been more than a little astonished at the composure with which she showed off the horses' paces, and went through various tricks. As she was young and inexperienced, he would get her cheaply; she could be taught all the stereotyped acts with very little trouble, and her morbid style of beauty would be a draw in Spain.

There was nothing of the English miss about her appearance and few people would have believed her to be only twenty-four. She had no freshness, no *beauté de diable*. Her beauty was that of line and modelling. Her quietness was partly the result

of a convent education. An old Irish nun had told her once that good looks were a snare and a delusion of the Devil, and that hers would never bring her happiness.

At least they had got her an engagement, and a circus had always represented to her the very height of romance.

She wondered how she could manage for money till she got her five pounds next Friday. It was lucky that all her habits, and so on, were provided by the management. She wished to-morrow would arrive, for she felt eager to begin work, and see the horses. She had quite forgotten all about Emile's promised visit, and was just pulling down the rest of her hair preparatory to getting ready for bed, when he walked in without any preliminary knock.

“How are you getting on? All right?” Then after a momentary inspection of the many garments that festooned the dirty walls, he added: “I don’t think you’ve got very good taste in clothes!”

CHAPTER II

“All women are good; good for something, or good for nothing.”

CERVANTES.

THE next morning Emile made his entrance with the same complete disregard ~~of~~ ceremony. Ari-thelli was still in bed and only half awake. She raised herself slightly and looked at him with sleepy eyes.

“Oh!” she said. “I didn’t hear you knock.”

There was the same entire lack of embarrassment in her manner that she had shown on the previous night. Almost before she had finished her sentence she shut her eyes again, and leant back yawning. It seemed a matter of the greatest indifference to her whether he was there or not. Emile’s interest ~~rose~~ by several degrees as he sat down on the edge of the bed.

“I didn’t knock,” he said, speaking English fluently enough, but with the hard, clipped accents of the Slav. “I can’t bother about all that humbug. If you’re straight with me I’ll be straight with you, and we may as well be friends. I dare say you

think you're very good-looking and all that, but it doesn't make any difference to me. You're here, and I'm here, so we may as well be here together."

"I'm so sorry," Arithelli replied, "but I'm always so stupid and sleepy in the mornings. Do you mind saying it all over again?"

And very much to his own surprise Emile Poleski repeated his remarks. It struck him that there was something of the boy, the *gamin*, about her in spite of her exotic appearance. That was so much the better and would suit admirably with his schemes for her. It was better that she should not be too much of a woman; for in the realms of anarchy there is no sex, though comradeship is elevated to the dignity of a fine art.

For chivalry and love making there is neither the time nor the desire, and those who are wedded to *La Liberté* find her an all-sufficient idol for purposes of worship. Human life is held of small account, to join the Cause being equivalent to the signing of one's own death warrant. One would probably have to die to-morrow if not to-day, and whether it were sooner or later mattered little. Emile's fierce devotion to the cause of his oppressed country had been the means of leaving him stranded in Barcelona at the age of forty, without hopes, illusions or ideals. His estates in Russia had been

confiscated, his parents were dead, the woman he had loved was married.

Now he lived in a dirty back street, in a single room, on two pounds a week, morbid, suspicious, cynical, keeping his own counsel, owning no friends, and occupying body and brain with plots, secret meetings, ciphers and the usual accompaniments of intrigue. The Brotherhood consisted of fifteen men, though occasionally the number varied. Two or three would disappear, another one come. There was no feminine element. An Anarchist seldom marries. To him a woman is either a machine or the lightest of light episodes.

Emile had not the least desire to make love to the girl whom he had for his own purposes befriended. He was a quick and subtle judge of character, and had seen at a glance that in her he would find a study of pronounced interest. Also she might prove of some utility. It was one of the tenets of the fraternity to which he belonged never to waste any material that might come to hand. In the finely-cut face before him, with its Oriental modelling and impassivity, he read brains, refinement and endurance. Her hair was plaited in two long braids, and drawn down over her ears, showing the contour of a sleek, smooth little head.

She had relapsed into silence after disposing of

the slovenly meal he had induced the landlady to provide. The only thing that seemed to worry her was the superfluous dirt that adorned the cups.

At length she spoke:

“And what sort of a place is this Barcelona?”

“*L'entresol de l'enfer,*” answered Emile curtly. “What are your people doing to allow you to come here alone?”

“They don't know I am here. I ran away, you see. If I get on well, I'll write and let them know, and if not —”

“*Alors?*”

“Oh, I don't know. But I will get on. Don't you think I ought to make a success at the Hippodrome?”

Emile ignored the *naïve* conceit of the last remark. “But what are you doing at the Hippodrome at all?” he demanded.

“I am riding,” she answered with an elfish smile in which her eyes took no part.

“Obviously! What are you going to do about *déjeuner*? The landlady won't bring you up all your meals.”

“I don't know,” was the unconcerned answer.

“You'll have to go to one of the *cafés*, and you had better let me show you which are the most de-

sirable ones. *Enfin!* have you any intention of getting up this morning?"

Arithelli yawned again. "I suppose I must go round and present myself to the Manager. I'm to rehearse a fortnight before I make my appearance in public."

"Then I had better come with you," Emile replied with decision. "As I told you yesterday, I know the Manager fairly well."

An hour later they walked together through the streets on their way to the Hippodrome. Emile was a bad advertisement for the secrecy of his profession, for he looked a typical ~~desperado~~. His velvet coat had the air of having been slept in for weeks, and had certainly never been on terms of acquaintanceship with a brush; and, besides the usual Anarchist badge, a red tie, a blood red carnation flamed defiance in his buttonhole.

Under a battered sombrero he scowled upon the world; a dark skin, fierce moustache, and arching black eyebrows over hard, grey eyes.

There are few people who look their parts in life, but Emile might without addition or alteration, have been transferred to the stage as the typical villain of a melodrama.

Arithelli had arrayed herself in the cornflower blue frock, which she carried with a negligent ease,

and she still wore the Panama hat with the flowing veil. As a matter of fact it was the only piece of headgear she possessed; for she had been reckless over dresses and boots in Paris and had found herself drawn up with a jerk in the midst of her purchases by her small stock of money coming to an abrupt end.

Of her carriage and general deportment, which were noticeably good even among Spanish women, Émile approved. The crude blue of her dress, the tags and ends of tinselled braid set his teeth on edge. In his "Count Poleski" days he had known the quiet and exquisite taste of the *mondaines* of Vienna and St. Petersburg, and like most men he preferred dark clothes in the street. Later on he proposed to himself the pleasure of supervising her wardrobe, except her boots, which met with his fullest approbation.

He noticed that she did not talk much but observed in silence. He felt that nothing escaped those heavy-lidded, curious eyes. "Is everything dirty in Spain?" she said at last.

"How fussy you are about dirt!" retorted Émile disagreeably.

"Yes. My mother is a Jewess, you know. I expect we notice these things more than the dirty Gentiles."

Her calm assertion of the superior cleanliness of the tribe of Israel, amused Emile, who had been accustomed to hear the usual contempt of the English-speaking races for anyone possessing a strain of Jewish blood. So it was the Jewess in her that accounted for her haunting voice.

The Manager was a hatchet-faced and haggard man who looked as if he went to bed about once a week, on an average, and existed principally on cigarettes and *absinthe*. The simultaneous arrival of Emile and Arithelli roused him from his normal condition of bored cynicism to comparative animation.

Like the landlady he naturally made his own conclusions.

“When did you arrive?” he demanded of Arithelli. Emile, not being afflicted with a sense of the necessity for elaborate explanation, removed himself a few paces and began to roll a cigarette.

Arithelli stood her ground, listened to the comments on her appearance which the Manager felt himself entitled to use, returned his cynical survey with a level glance, and answered his questions with an unruffled composure.

It was arranged that she should rehearse every day for two hours in the morning, and another two hours between the afternoon and evening per-

formances. For the first act she could wear a habit of any colour she cared to choose, and a smart hat; for the second act, which included jumping over gates, and the presence of the inevitable clown, she would have to wear short skirts.

"*They* won't suit me," she said. "You see how long and thin I am, and look at my long feet. I shall look a burlesque."

The Manager glared at her.

"I quite believe you will," he snapped. "I suppose you think you're going to do the leaping act in a court train and feathers! Is there anything more you would like to suggest?"

The intended sarcasm was not a success. Ari-thelli considered gravely.

"I don't think so, thank you," she said at last. "But if I *do* think of anything else I'll tell you. And I *should* like to see the horses."

She was filled with a genuine delight by the four cream-coloured pure-bred Andalusians, El Rey, Don Quixote, Cavaliero and Don Juan. They turned intelligent eyes upon her as she entered their stalls, neighing gently as if they recognised a friend. Both the men experienced the same feeling of surprise at her evident knowledge and understanding of animals. In five minutes she had

shown that she knew as much about their harness and food as a competent groom.

The astute Manager, upon whom no sign of intelligence was wasted, saw a good opportunity for getting a little extra work out of his youthful leading lady. He informed her that she must be down at the stables every morning at eight o'clock to inspect the horses and see them fed and watered. As a matter of fact the inspection should have been one of his own duties, but the girl was not likely to cavil at any little additional work that had not been exactly specified in her contract. Besides, if she did, he could soon make it uncomfortable for her. Arithelli made no objection. Though she hated getting up early she would never have grudged a sacrifice of comfort made on behalf of any animal. When all the business was completed, Emile took her to the *Café Colomb* for lunch.

Before they left he knew the details of her history.

The big house in Ireland, with its stud of horses and unlimited hospitality, and the rapidly vanishing fortune. Her mother, a Viennese by birth, a cosmopolitan by travel and education, a fine horse-woman, and extravagance incarnate. Her father, good-natured, careless, manly, as sportsmanlike and

unbusinesslike as most Irishmen. When his horses died he bought more, keeping always open house for a colony of men as shiftless and as easy-going as himself.

As the children grew up the money became less and less. They were sent to Convent schools in France and Belgium, then to cheap schools in England.

At length the final crash came, and the big, picturesque, rambling house in Galway was sold, and they came to London with an infinitesimal income partly derived from the grudging charity of relatives.

Arithelli cleaned the doorsteps and the kitchen stove, blackleaded the grates and prepared the meals, which more often than not consisted only of potatoes and tea.

Their mother, who hated all domestic work, and could never be induced to see that their loss of money was due to her own extravagance, retired to bed, where she spent her days in reading Plato in the original, and writing charming French lyrics.

When Arithelli ran away she had gone straight to an old friend of her mother's, the widow of an ambassador in Paris. She had made up her mind to earn her own living. She would carve out for herself a career. Having decided that riding was

her most saleable accomplishment, she had gone round to the riding school where the managers of the Hippodromes of Vienna, Buda-Pesth and Barcelona waited to select *equestriennes*.

Luck, youthful confidence, and her tragic, un-youthful beauty, had all ranged themselves together to procure her the much desired engagement.

"I made up my mind to get taken on," she concluded. "*Et me voilà!* I did all sorts of desperate jumps that day. I felt desperate. If I hadn't got it, there was only the Morgue. I couldn't have gone home."

Emile listened in silence, and drank *absinthe* and considered.

That night at a meeting of the Brotherhood he took the leader, Sobrenski, aside and said:

"It was decided the other day that we wanted someone to take messages and run errands. Someone who could go unnoticed into places where it would be suspicious for us to be seen. You suggested a boy. Fate has been so kind as to show me a woman who seems to be in every way suitable — or at least with a little training she will become so."

"A woman!" echoed the other. "Are you mad?"

"I conclude her to be a woman because of her

clothes. Otherwise she seems to be a mixture of a boy and wood-elf. The combination appears to me to be a fascinating one. She is of good family, half Irish, speaks three languages, asks no questions, and seems to have an extraordinary capacity for holding her tongue. It is on that account that I questioned her sex. Her appearance is excessively feminine. Of course I do not propose to enrol her among us at once. As I have said before, there are many ways in which a woman would be useful."

Sobrenski pulled doubtfully at his reddish, pointed beard. "Does she know anything about the Cause?"

"I fancy not, but she appears to have the right ideas, and after I have judiciously fanned the flame!—girls of that age are always wildly enthusiastic over something—so she may as well devote her enthusiasm to us."

CHAPTER III

“Out of the uttermost end of things
On the side of life that is seamier,
There lies a land, so its poet sings,
Whose people call it Bohemia.

“It is not old, it is not new,
It is not false, it is not true,
And they will not answer for what they do,
Far away in Bohemia.”

“Love in Bohemia,” DOLF WYLLARDE.

“I THINK,” Arithelli said with deliberation, “that all your friends are very fatiguing. They have such bad tempers, and do nothing but argue.”

“They live for the serious things of life,” retorted Emile. “Not to play the fool.”

“Thanks! Is this one of the serious things of life, do you suppose?” She stuck the large needle with which she had been awkwardly cobbling a tear in her skirt, into the seat of a chair.

“What are you doing that for?” demanded Emile.

“Oh, pardon, I forgot.” She extracted the needle. “I don’t think I’m unwomanly but I’m not a good sewer. Emile! don’t you think we

might have some music? I really am beginning to sing '*Le Rêve*' quite well."

Her education in Anarchy had commenced with the teaching of ~~revolutionary~~ songs. Emile, who was himself music-mad, had discovered her to be possessed of a rough contralto voice of a curious mature quality. It would have been an absurd voice for ballads in a drawing-room, but it suited fiery declamations in praise of *La Liberté*!

They were sitting in Emile's room now, for they made use of each other's lodgings alternately, and there was a battered and rather out-of-tune piano. Sometimes, after the evening performance, there would be a gathering of the conspirators, all more or less morose, unshaven and untidy; and while Emile played for her, Arithelli would stand in the middle of the room, her green eyes blazing out of her pale face, her arms folded, singing with a fervour which surprised even her teacher, the lovely impassioned "*Rêve du prisonnier*" of Rubinstein. She was always pleased with her own performances, and not in the least troubled with shyness. Also she was invariably eager to practise. She shook down her skirt, went across to the piano and began to pick out the notes.

*"S'il faut, ah, prends ma vie.
Mais rends-moi la liberté!"*

Emile was sewing on buttons. Though he did not look in the least domesticated, he was far more dexterous at such work than the long-fingered Ari-thelli. In fact it was only at his suggestion that she ever mended anything at all.

"Do you ever by chance realise what you are singing about?" he demanded.

"Of course I do. I'm a red hot Socialist. I've read Tolstoi's books and lots of others. I got in an awful scrape over political things just the little time I was in Paris. It was when the Dreyfus case was on. Madame Bertrand was terrified at the way I aired my opinions. You see politics are so different abroad to what they are in England."

Emile agreed. The girl was developing even more than he had hoped.

"Ah! This is the first time I've ever heard about your political opinions."

"You've never asked me before. One doesn't know everything about a person at once."

Again Emile agreed. Then he said abruptly, "Well, if you have all these ideas you'd better join the Cause."

"I'd love to! Shall I have to go to meetings with Sobrenski and all the rest of them?"

"Probably. But you'll not be expected to talk.

You may be told to do some writing or carry messages."

"Is that all?" She seemed rather disappointed.

Emile felt for a moment almost inclined to develop scruples. She evidently regarded Anarchy at large as a species of particularly exciting diversion.

"Who are the other women mixed up with it?" she asked.

"There are no other women. You should feel honoured that we are having you."

Emile stood up, having completed his renovating operations. "You want to sing, eh?" Arithelli assented eagerly. "You will work?" Emile demanded.

"Yes!" Her eyes had become suddenly like green jewels, and she looked almost animated. She was more interested in Emile's music than in any other part of him. His wild Russian ballads sung with his strange clipped accent and fiery emphasis, fascinated her. She was content to listen for an indefinite period of time, her long body in a restful attitude, her feet crossed, her hands in her lap, as absolutely immovable as one who is hypnotised.

Emile, for his part, was equally interested in her exploits in vocalism, which he found as extraor-

dinary and unexpected as everything else about her. Her singing voice was so curiously unlike her speaking voice that it might have belonged to another person. It had tremendous possibilities and a large range, but it was hoarse and harsh, and yet full of an uncanny attraction. In such a voice a sorceress of old might have crooned her incantations. Where did this girl get her soul, her passion, he wondered; she who was only just beginning life.

He flung over an untidy pile of music, and dragged out the magnificently devilish "*Enchantment*" of Massenet. "Try this," he said abruptly. "It's *your* kind of song."

For half-an-hour he exhorted, bullied and instructed, losing both his composure and his temper. Arithelli lost neither. "I don't understand music," she observed calmly. "But show me what to do and I'll do it. Mine's a queer voice, isn't it? A regular croak."

"You've got a voice; yes, that's true, but you don't know how to produce it, and you've no technique. You want plenty of scales."

"Wouldn't that take all the rough off, and make it just like anyone's voice?"

Emile stared angrily at the exponent of such heresy, and was about to annihilate her with sar-

casm, when he suddenly changed his mind. After all, she was right. It was what she called "the rough" that helped to make her voice unlike the voices of most women.

"Is that your idea? A good excuse for being lazy! If you don't sing scales then you must work hard at songs."

"Yes, I know." She put her hands behind her back and leant against the piano. "There was a man in Paris, a friend of the manager. He heard me sing once. He knew I wanted to take up a profession, and he offered to train me for nothing, and bring me out on the stage. I was to sing those queer, dramatic, half-monotone songs in which one almost *speaks* the words. He meant to write them specially for me, and I was to wear an oriental costume. He said that every other voice would sound *fâde* after mine."

Emile glanced at her sharply, but her tone and manner was both absolutely void of conceit. "Well, why didn't you accept his offer?"

"I don't know. I suppose because it was fated I should come here. He wanted me to make my *début* at the *cafés chantants*, but I didn't like the idea somehow. He said my voice was only fit for the stage, and would sound horrible in a room."

Emile twisted his moustache upwards, and his

eyebrows climbed in the same direction. "So! Do you think then that your life at the Hippodrome is going to be more what you English call respectable, than the *cafés chantants*?"

"There are the horses here. If I don't like anything else I can always like them."

Emile decided that the man in Paris had been apt in his judgment of this fantastic voice. Clever of him also to have noticed that she was Oriental. The setting of her green eyes was of the East. And horses were the only things she cared about — so far. Like most people whose lives are a complicated tangle of plots, Emile was not particularly interested in animals. His life, thoughts and environment were morbid, and the dumb creation too normal and healthy to appeal greatly to him. He discovered that his pupil was able to play in much the same inconsistent fashion that she sang. With a beautiful touch, full of temperament and expression, she possessed a profound ignorance of the rudiments of music. She could not read the notes, she said, but she could copy anything he played if she heard it two or three times. Emile found her astonishingly intelligent as well as amiable, and though the music lessons were not conducted on scientific principles, they produced good results.

He would give her plenty of music with which

to occupy herself till the time came when she would be fully occupied in serving the Cause. As he had said, there were no other female conspirators in their circle. Sobrenski, the red-haired leader, detested women, and thought them all fools, who generally added the sin of treachery to their foolishness. Emile himself had taken no interest in any woman since he had lived in Barcelona. He too had found them treacherous. Since he had lost his little childish goddess, Marie Roumanoff, he had had no desire to play the rôle of lover. If he wanted companionship he preferred men, for as companions women bored him.

But Arithelli was not a woman — yet. She appeared able to keep own counsel, to do as she was told, and to judge by the way she rode, her courage would be capable of standing a severe test. Also it had occurred to him that she possessed the art of being a good comrade. It would amuse him to watch her develop. At present she was full of illusions about the charm of life in general. Everything for her showed rose-tinged. Well, it was not his business to dispel illusions. At present it was all "*Le Rêve*," but after the dream would come awakening. He took care to leave her very little alone during the first few days, and arranged her time according to his own ideas, and

escorted her backwards and forwards from her rehearsals at the Hippodrome.

When she was free he took her for long walks up the hills where they could look down upon the gorgeous city, which, as far as natural loveliness went, might have been compared to Paradise rather than to the Hell to which he invariably likened it.

The beautiful harbour, the dry air, the sunlight and splashes of vivid colour — everything was intoxicating to her. She said very little, but Emile felt that she missed nothing, and lacked nothing in appreciation. For himself the place must be always hateful, for he was in exile. What was the golden sunlight to him when he longed for the snows and frozen wastes of Russia, that sombre country so like the hearts of those by whom it is peopled.

One day he took her for an excursion to Montserrat, three hours' journey from Barcelona. They left the train at Monistrol, and started to walk through the vineyards and pine woods towards the famous mountain that towers up to heaven in grey rugged terraces of rock. All round, for miles, were undulating waves of green, here and there the brown towers of some ancient castle, or the buildings of a farmstead; and below on the plain the

glitter of the winding river. They climbed to the wooded slopes of Olese, where they sat down to rest. Arithelli threw herself on the short, dry grass, with her arms under her head, and drew a long breath of pleasure and relief.

“I love all this; it makes me feel so free.”

Emile sat with his back against a huge plane tree, and rolled cigarettes, watching her under his heavy eyebrows. She looked in her proper place here, he thought. There was something wild and animal-like about the grace of her attitude.

“So you’re out of a convent?” he said, hurling out the remark with his usual abruptness. “*Tiens!* It’s absurd!”

“But it’s true. Convent schools are cheap, you see, that’s why we were sent there. No, I’m not a Catholic. Most of the girls made their abjurations, but I never did. They told lies there, and they spied. I hated that. The nuns spied on the children of Mary, and the children of Mary spied on the ones who were not the children of Mary, and—” she stopped.

Emile told her to continue. “I should like to hear more about your—your religious experiences,” he said. “Besides, it will do you more good to talk than to go to sleep.”

Arithelli complied at once, with unruffled good

nature. "Oh, of course I'll tell you if you like," she said amiably. "I stopped because I thought you would probably be bored, *ennuyé*, you know."

She described the nuns mumbling their prayers, and punctuating them with irate commands to the children; the many and various rules, the *Mère Supérieure*, the food, the clothes, the eccentricities of *Monsieur le Directeur*. She had the rare and unwomanlike art of witty description, though it assorted badly with her tragic face and unsmiling eyes. As she talked her voice rippled and broke into suppressed laughter.

"It was all rather dull, *n'est-ce-pas?*" said Emile, who felt more amusement than he had any intention of showing. "You'll find the Cause more exciting."

Before any practical steps were taken to make her a member of the band it was necessary to stimulate her enthusiasm, her imagination. He knew that for all her outward calmness she had no lack of fire. The coldest countries sometimes produced the most raging volcanoes.

"It's the only thing you care about — isn't it — the Cause?" she said. "Tell me more about it. As I'm going in for it I ought to understand. Of course I like anything that's 'agin the Government.'

All the Irish have always been rebels and patriots. We've helped your country too."

Emile did not require a second invitation to induce him to expound his views. "I suppose you think we throw bombs about by way of a little distraction?" he asked sarcastically. "What have we suffered before we took to throwing bombs? Before I came here I saw men and women, old and young together, shot down in the streets of St. Petersburg. Because they rioted? No! Because they wished to offer a protest against the brutalities of the Government officials. Are our petitions ever read, our entreaties ever answered? There were other things too, but they didn't generally get into the newspapers. Women stripped in barrack rooms,— and that in winter,— the Russian winter,— and beaten by common soldiers. Not women of the streets and slums, but women of the higher classes. Mock trials held with closed doors, the crime,— to have incurred the displeasure of someone in favour at the Court,— the end,— Siberia! A student is known to be quiet, a great reader and interested in the condition of the serfs. He is watched, arrested, and on the false evidence of the police ends his days in the mines. Entreaties, reason, appeal! Have we not tried them? Now we have only one weapon left — retaliation. Some-

times we are able to avenge our martyrs. The two fiends who guarded Marie Spiridonova were shot by the members of her Society. She was only a girl too — about the same age as you. We Anarchists do not serenade women and make them compliments, but we think it an honour to kiss the hand of such as Marie Spiridonova. She was tortured, starved, outraged, and came through worse than death to be transported to a convict settlement. Now she is in the Malzoff Prison. She will never see the world again, but it may be years before the life is ground out of her by labour and privations. Her case will soon be forgotten, except by a few, and thousands of other women have gone the same road. The details of the tragedy may be a little different, the thing itself is the same. One day I shall go back to my own country. In the meantime I carry on the campaign here.

“ It’s a losing cause. But if we lose we pay. We don’t ask for mercy ! ”

• • • • •

They sat together that evening at a *café* on the Rambla, the strolling place of the Spanish beauties, who promenaded there in an endless stream, with waving fans and rustling draperies, carnations and roses burning in dark, elaborately dressed hair.

Tziganes made wild, witch music. At the *cafés* people laughed and drank.

Suddenly Arithelli leant across the little table, raising her glass. "To the Cause!" she whispered under her breath.

For an instant the two pairs of eyes flamed into each other; then those of the man, hard and steel-grey, softened into something like admiration. Their glasses clinked softly together. "To the Cause!" he repeated. "*Mon Camarade!*"

CHAPTER IV

“These were things she came to know, and to take their measure,
When the play was played out so for one man’s pleasure.”
SWINBURNE.

A FEW days later, Arithelli was duly initiated, and given the badge of the Cause, a massive buckle with a woman’s figure, and on either side the words *Honneur et Patrie*. At the suggestion of the leader Emile had been made responsible for her behaviour. If she betrayed them in any way his life was to pay forfeit. There was a fellow ~~conspirator~~ working with her at the Hippodrome, a young Austrian of high rank named Vardri. His father had turned him out of doors, penniless, because of his political views; and he was now, half-starved, consumptive and reckless, employed in harnessing the horses and attending to the stables. There were two men under thirty, but the majority were middle-aged. They all seemed to Arithelli to have the same wild, restless eyes. They called her “*Camarade*,” and “*Amigo*,” and treated her not

unkindly, but with an utter indifference to her sex. All their sayings showed the most absolute disregard for human life.

“If a vase is cracked, break it. If your glove is worn out, throw it away.”

If they heard that some member of the band had found his way to the fortress of Montjuich there was callous laughter and a speculation as to whose turn it would be next.

Their meetings were held in divers places. Sometimes they would engage a room at the Hotel Catalonia and hold what were supposed to be classes for astronomy. Sobrenski was the lecturer, the rest posing as students. If anyone came in unexpectedly it all looked beautifully innocent—the big telescope by the open window, the books and papers and charts, and Arithelli at the desk at the end of the room taking shorthand notes of the lecture.

There were seldom more than three or four *rendezvous* held in the same place, and more than once there were alarms and rumours of a visit from the police.

As the days wore on Emile found new reason to congratulate himself upon his discovery of “Fatalité,” as he had nicknamed the girl. She had shown herself possessed of a charming temper, a

fine intelligence, and a most complete understanding of the law of obedience.

She made no comments on anything she was asked to do, but delivered messages and ran errands after the manner of a machine in good working order. Even Sobrenski, who hated all women, was obliged to admit her usefulness.

She was on pleasant terms with everybody down to the strappers,—the men who harnessed the Hippodrome horses,—who adored her. Even the cynical Manager was impressed by her pluck and skill, though he considered it his privilege to regale her with comments on her personal peculiarities.

The time arrived for her first performance at the Hippodrome. She made her appearance in the ring in a turquoise blue habit, trimmed hussar-fashion with much braid, and a plumed Cavalier hat, the dusky shadows under her eyes accentuated, and her face powdered. The Manager would not allow her to use rouge, so under the glaring electric lights she appeared more than ever spiritual and unearthly.

Her type, he said, did not require colour; and the people preferred anything morbid in the shape of looks.

Emile, who was among the audience on the first night, thought she looked like a thorough-bred racer

as she made a dignified entrance to a clanging stately gavotte crashed out by the band. He had given her dresser a couple of *pesetas* to have her well turned out, and the result was exceedingly satisfactory even to his critical eyes.

Her little head with its piled red hair was carried marvellously high, and she swayed daintily on the back of the high-stepping Don Juan. She bowed gravely to the various parts of the house, but she had no stereotyped smile either for the boxes or for the lower seats. Her slender figure gave the impression of great strength for a young girl.

“Steel in a velvet sheath, *ma foi!* Body and soul!” was Emile’s inward comment. “So much the better for the Cause.”

A Spanish crowd usually gives but a languid reception unless roused by something either horrible or sensational, but her bizarre appearance had the effect which the Manager had foreseen.

In the second act she apparently changed her personality with her clothes, and whirled in astride over two horses with neither saddle nor bridle; guiding them and keeping them together by the pressure of her feet. She had full skirts, to her knees, of white satin, and pearl-coloured silk stockings. Her satin bodice was cut heart-shaped and there was a high jewelled band round her long

throat. Her hair hung down in a thick plait, tied with a bow of blue velvet.

The horses tore round the ring at full gallop; she jumped over gates and through hoops, and ended her performance by leaping off one of the horses which was caught by a groom, and flinging herself on to the other, face to the tail, for a final reckless canter round the arena.

The brilliance and nerve with which she carried through the trick, roused the enthusiasm it deserved, and Arithelli passed out panting and triumphant to the accompaniment of music and cheers, and showered roses and carnations.

The part of her work that she most abhorred was the eight o'clock compulsory visit to the stables. A circus life is not prone to encourage the virtue of early rising, and she was by nature indolent in a panther-like fashion, and was never in bed till half-past one or two in the morning. If she had known a little more she could have protested on the grounds that her position of leading lady did not involve the feeding of her animals. She did it as she had done other things without complaint, and presently Emile came to the rescue. He knew as much about the habits and requirements of horses as he knew about shop-keeping, being entirely ignorant of both.

"How much are the brutes to have?" he asked of the Manager. "And what on earth do you give them?"

"Oh, I generally give 'em fish," was the sarcastic answer. "What are you doing here, Poleski? This is the girl's business. I thought she was keen on her horses."

"She is also keen on her bed," Emile answered. "She does her share of work."

The Manager grumbled, but the new arrangement was allowed to stand.

Arithelli did not consort with the other female members of the Hippodrome.

The one exception was Estelle the dancer, with whom Emile allowed her a slight acquaintance. He neither approved of women in general nor of their friendships. Estelle was the *bonne amie* of the sardonic Manager, who occasionally beat her, after which ceremony it was her custom to drink *absinthe*. Sometimes, for this reason, she was unable to appear on the stage. She would come into Arithelli's dressing room and weep, and smoke innumerable cigarettes, and when things had been going well, they made a *partie carrée* at the Café Colomb.

By way of advertising herself and her performance Arithelli was given a high, smartly painted

carriage in which she drove in the fashionable promenade of Barcelona, the Paséo de Gracia, with three of the cream-coloured horses lightly harnessed and jingling with bells.

On these occasions Emile played the part of lady's maid and escort. He selected her dress, fastened it, scolded her for putting her hat on crooked, and laced up her preposterously high boots.

Then he adjusted the battered sombrero, lit a cigarette and drove beside her, scowling as usual.

The appearance of both was sufficiently arresting. Arithelli drove as she rode, recklessly, and yet with science. Her thin wrists and long girlish arms were capable of controlling the most fiery animal.

She had made Emile her banker, and always handed over to him her weekly salary, some of which went to the expenses of the Cause as well as a certain portion in fines, for she had no idea of time and was never ready for anything.

Nearly every night before she was half-way into her habit the call-boy came screaming down the passage, calling with the free-and-easy manners prevalent behind the scenes:

“Hurry up, Arithelli, or there'll be a row!”

The question of a disguise for her was discussed

at one of the meetings of the Brotherhood, and it was decided that she should appear as a boy. Her height would be an advantage, and her long hands and feet would also help the illusion in a country where every woman possesses small, plump and highly arched extremities. Besides, when they had to ride out to places at night, she would be less noticeable. One girl among a crowd of men might attract suspicion, though in the daytime she was more useful as a woman.

It naturally fell upon Emile to provide the details of her transformation, and he presented himself at her lodgings one afternoon, bearing an ungainly parcel which he deposited on the table.

"You'd better try these on," he said. "There is a complete suit of boy's clothes, a wig and everything you'll want. You will have to put your own hair out of the way somehow."

It was the drowsy hour of the *siesta*, when no one moved out if he could help it, and all work and play were at a standstill. Arithelli was sitting, as was her custom, absorbed in her own thoughts and dreams. For a moment she stared with uncomprehending eyes. She felt tired, she wanted to be alone, and she had not heard a single word. Emile shrugged irritably and repeated his remarks.

"Oh, yes," said Arithelli. She rose slowly, took up the parcel and retired into seclusion behind the curtains, with which she had screened off the alcove and so made herself an improvised dressing room. The rest of the apartment she had altered to look as much like a sitting room as possible, with the exception of the obtrusive four-poster, which could not be hidden and which upon entering appeared the most salient feature visible. There was some tawdry jewellery lying about, and several pairs of the pale-hued Parisian boots she invariably affected. Emile made and lighted the inevitable cigarette, while he fidgeted about, turning over the few French and English novels he could find with an air of disapproval; for her taste in literature did not commend itself to him any more than did her taste in finery.

At one period of his life he had steeped himself in books, knowing the poetry and romance of nearly every nation. Now he disliked them. If she wanted books he would choose them for her. She would read the love-songs of the revolutionists to their goddess Liberty, the haunting words of those who had suffered for a time, and escaped the Siberian Ice-Hell. The fanaticism of his race and temperament flamed into his cold eyes as he sat and brooded, and he hardly noticed that Arithelli

had slid into the room in her noiseless fashion, and was standing before him.

Emile, though little given to being astonished, marvelled at the unconcern with which she submitted to his critical inspection. She stood and walked easily, and looked neither uncomfortable nor unnatural in her boyish array, in which the perfect poise of her body showed triumphantly.

The black wig, under which she had skilfully hidden her red hair, made her look more pale than ever. The wide sombrero, tilted backwards, made a picturesque framing to her oval face, and the *manta* or heavy cloak, worn by all Spaniards at night, hung, loosely draped over her left shoulder. Emile promptly twisted it off.

"This won't do," he said. "The *manta* is never worn like that. Besides it's not enough of a disguise. Watch how I put it on." With a few rough yet dexterous movements he arranged the dark folds so as to hide her shoulders and the upper part of her body.

Then he stood back a few paces. "But your green eyes! A disguise for *them* will be impossible. One sees them always."

"*Les yeux verts.*

Vont à l'enfer!"

"Do you know that, *mon enfant?*"

"I've heard it before. They've already come as far as *l'entresol*, according to you."

Emile grinned. He enjoyed skirmishing, and felt that he had met his match in words. Before he could think of another retort she added:

"I can see in the dark with my green eyes, so they're useful at all events."

"Then you'll find plenty of use for them when you're working for us—and the Cause. When you have to ride upon the hills at night you will find them of great service. You'll have to ride astride too, so it is better for you in every way to be dressed like this."

Presently he left her with a few words of praise for her successful appearance. His first feeling of surprise at her coolness still lingered. He had expected a scene in a quiet way, a refusal, at least expostulation. All his first impressions of her were being verified. Well, he hoped she would continue in her present ways. Undoubtedly she was an original, certainly she gave no trouble.

When she heard the street door shut Arithelli sat down, hiding her face in her hands. Once she shivered involuntarily. Directly she found herself alone the mask of her assumed nonchalance had fallen suddenly. As long as there was an audience she had worn a disguise on her soul as well as her

body. She had been feeling moody and depressed all day, and this last episode was the climax. Everything she had was to be her own no longer. It was all to be for the Cause — even her green eyes! What power it possessed over these men. They admitted it to be a losing Cause, yet it was all they thought about, the sole thing for which they lived — and died. She had not thought it would be like this at first.

She remembered how gaily she had discoursed of Tolstoi and Prince Kropotkin, and of their writings which had revealed to her a new world. Her first interview with Sobrenski had shown the relentlessness of the man she was to serve. She felt that he would sacrifice all alike, men and women, to his idol, and would never stop to care whether the victim were willing or unwilling. The fact of her sex would gain her no consideration at his hands. Lately she had been impressed with the sensation of being surrounded by an impassable barrier drawn round her, a circle that was gradually becoming narrowed. She had begun to know that she was being incessantly watched. If Emile were occupied with the business of the Society, and could not fetch her from the Hippodrome himself, he never failed to send an understudy in the shape of one of his allies, generally one of the older men.

When she emerged from the performers' entrance a silent figure would come forward to meet her. Often they exchanged no words throughout the walk home, but she was never left till her own door was reached.

If she went anywhere to please herself, to a shop, or to see Estelle, she was expected to give a full account of her doings. It was an understood thing that she should not go to the *cafés* or public gardens alone, nor speak to anyone not already known and approved by Emile. With all these conditions she had complied. Already one illusion had vanished. She had thought to find freedom in Barcelona.

She had indeed found "*La Liberté*."

But the Fates had chosen to be in an ironical mood, and while making the discovery she had herself become a slave. In all her day there was no hour that she could call her own.

CHAPTER V

“I have gained her! Her Soul’s mine!”

BROWNING.

“You slouched last night in the ring, Fatalité,” Emile said.

Arithelli flung up her head. “I didn’t!”

“You looked like a monkey on a stick,” proceeded Emile stolidly. “You were all hunched up. I wonder Don Juan didn’t put you off his back on to the tan.”

“Don Juan knows better! You see animals are usually more kind than people.”

She was too proud to admit that the long hours, hard work, and want of proper food and sleep had lately given her furious backaches, which were a thing unknown to her before, and a cause of bitter resentment. She had a healthy distaste for illness either in theory or practice. That night she sat Don Juan erect as a lance, passing Emile in his accustomed place in the lower tier of seats with a shrug and scornful eyebrows.

She had felt more than usually inclined to play

the coward during the last few weeks. The heat, worry and over-fatigue had begun, as they must have done eventually, to affect her nerves. When she had felt more than usually depressed and listless Emile had taken her to one of the *cafés* and given her *absinthe* which had made her feel recklessly well for the moment, and ten times more miserable the next day. He had also advised her to smoke, saying that it was good for people who had whims and fancies, but smoking did not appeal to her, and she never envied the Spanish woman her eternal cigarette.

She felt as if she would like to sleep, sleep for an indefinite period. She was wearied to death of The Cause, and the Brotherhood, with their intrigues and plots and interminable cipher messages.

She had been three months in Barcelona, and now fully justified Emile's name for her. Tragic as a veritable mask of Fate, she looked ten years older than the girl he had met on the station platform.

The longer she worked for the Cause the more she realised that Anarchy was no plaything for spare moments, but a juggling with Life and Death.

At first they had given her but little to do — a few documents to copy, some cipher messages to carry. Then the demands upon her leisure had

become more frequent. She found she was expected to make no demur at being sent for miles, and once or twice there had been dreadful midnight excursions to a hut up in the mountains.

The realisation of the folly of trying to escape from the burden that had been laid upon her affected her nerve and seat during her performances in the ring.

For the first time she felt her courage failing her when she entered Sobrenski's house in answer to his summons. When he had given her the despatch she made an objection on the grounds that the time taken in conveying it would absorb her few hours of rest.

"It's too far," she protested. "I can't go there to-day."

"Then you can go to-morrow," answered Sobrenski in the accents of finality. He had never cared about the girl's inclusion in their plots, and took his revenge in exacting from her considerably more than his pound of flesh.

Moreover he suspected her of treachery, and disliked her for the quickness of her wit in argument.

Even his unseeing eyes told him she looked both ill and haggard, but if she were there, well, she must work like the rest of them.

Arithelli hesitated for a moment, and when she

spoke for all her pluck her voice was a little rough and uneven. "I'm tired of being an errand boy!"

Sobrenski looked at her, drawing his eyebrows together. Everyone of the band had a nickname for her, and his own very unpleasant one was "Deadly Nightshade." Some of the others were "Sapho" and "Becky Sharp," which latter Emile had also adopted as being particularly appropriate.

"Oh, very well," he answered. "Shall it be the messages or a bullet? You can take your choice. Perhaps you would prefer the latter. It makes no difference to me. This comes of employing women. When Poleski brought you here first I was opposed to having you. Women always give trouble."

"Would you have got a man to do half the work I do?" she flashed out with desperate courage.

"Then *do* your work and don't talk about it," retorted Sobrenski sharply. "If you are absolutely ill and in bed, of course we can't expect you to go to various places, but as long as you can ride every night at the Hippodrome, you can certainly carry messages."

He turned his back on her and took up some papers from the table, and Arithelli went out, beaten and raging.

Emile found her lying on the bed, her hands

clenched by her side, her proud mouth set in bitter lines. As he came in she turned away from him, to face the wall.

“*Tiens!*” he observed, “you are a lazy little trollop.” Emile was proud of his English slang.

Finding there was no answer he changed his tone. “Hysterics, eh? They won’t do here. Turn over, I want to talk to you.”

The girl moved mechanically, and Emile surveyed her. There were slow tears forcing themselves under her heavy eyelids.

“I wish I were dead!”

“Probably you will be soon. So will the rest of us.”

“What brutes you all are!”

“Because we don’t care whether we die to-day or to-morrow? *Souvent femme varie!* Just now you seemed so anxious,—besides, if one belongs to the Cause one knows what to expect.” Emile strolled towards the uncomfortable piece of furniture by the window, that purported to be an arm-chair, and sat down.

“I loathe the Cause! I didn’t belong to it from choice. Why did you make me join?”

“Because I thought you would be useful. You are useful and probably will be more so.”

"Suppose I refuse to do anything more?"

"They will not give you the choice of refusing twice."

"Emile, I believe you are trying to frighten me. Tell me what they would do."

"As I introduced you to the Brotherhood, I should naturally be the one chosen to execute judgment on you. *Enfin*, my dear Arithelli, I should be called upon to shoot you. We don't forgive ~~red~~ traitors. If we let everyone draw back from their work simply because they happened to be afraid, what would become of the Cause? Also let me remind you how you came to me boasting of your love of freedom. 'I'm a red-hot Socialist.' That's what you said, didn't you? Perhaps you have forgotten it. "Well, I haven't. Socialism doesn't consist of standing up in a room to sing."

Arithelli made no answer. She lay like a dead thing, and after a pause the slow cynical voice went on.

"There was another woman in our affair about two years ago. Her name was Félide Rivaz. She got engaged to one of the men, and then it suddenly occurred to her that comfortable matrimony and Anarchy didn't seem likely to be enjoyed at one and the same time. So she persuaded the man to

turn traitor and run away to England with her, where they proposed to get married.

“Their plans came out,—naturally,—those things generally do. We all spy upon each other. They both felt so secure that they came together to a last meeting—I can show you the house if you like. It’s down in the Parelelo, the revolutionary quarter.

“They strangled the woman, and cut off her arm above the elbow—I remember she had a thick gold bracelet round it with a date (a *gage d’amour* from her lover I suppose)—and they made him drink the blood. He went mad afterwards. The best thing he could do under the circumstances.” Emile shrugged.

“There are plenty more similar *histoires*. But perhaps I have told you enough to convince you of the futility of attempting to draw back from what you have undertaken.”

Still there was neither movement nor answer. Emile got up, and came to the bed.

“*Allons!* It’s time you were dressing. You’ll be late again, and one of these days you’ll find yourself dismissed. You must just go on and put up with it all. Life mostly consists of putting up with things.”

But even this consoling philosophy failed to have a rousing effect.

For the first time in her life Arithelli had fainted.

When she came to her senses that evening Emile sent the landlady with a message to the Hippodrome, telling the Manager to substitute another turn, and then made Arithelli get into bed. Her dress and boots came off and reposed upon the floor. The rest of her clothes were left on.

These details did not worry Emile. Then he found a book and sat reading till she had drifted into a heavy sleep, the sleep of exhaustion.

In his own way he was sorry for her, and his feelings were by no means as brutal as his words. At the same time he did not believe in a display of sympathy. According to his ideas it was demoralising, and cured no one of complaints, imaginary or otherwise.

Also it was likely to make people hysterical. Therefore when Arithelli woke at six o'clock in the morning, and sat up panting, with a hand at her left side, he elevated both shoulders and eyebrows.

“Qu'est ce-qu vous avez donc? You're all right now.”

He knew perfectly well that there was no pre-

tence of illness. The strained eyes, the blue shadows round the mouth told their own tale.

"Oh, Emile, my heart feels so queer! I'm sure it must be all wrong."

"*Ma foi! Ces femmes là! Il y a toujours quelque chose!*" First a faint, then a heart! How often am I to tell you, Arithelli, that that part of your — your — how do you say it? — anatomy — is quite without use here? Have you any brandy in the room?"

"There's Eau de Cologne on the washstand."

He mixed water with the spirit and gave her a liberal dose that soon helped her to look less ghastly.

She lay back feeling almost comfortable, wishing Emile would see fit to depart, but Count Poleski returned again to the subject of her misbehaviour.

Like most men he was not at his best in the early morning, and the night's vigil had not improved his temper.

He sat scowling after his manner, black eyebrows meeting over grey eyes, hard as flint. "If you are going in for this kind of performance, what will be the use of you?" he enquired sarcastically.

Perhaps after all Sobrenski had been right in employing no women.

"Even the best machine will get out of order sometimes," the girl replied wearily.

"And when that happens one sets to work to find another machine to take its place."

"I didn't know about the horrors; you ought to have told me. It isn't fair."

There was neither passion nor resentment in the low voice. "What shall I do?" she went on, after waiting for Emile to speak.

"Put up with it, or better still go in for the Cause seriously."

"Don't you call this serious? Blood and brutalities and slave-driving? You talked about *l'entresol de l'enfer*, but I'm beginning to think I've stepped over the threshold."

"Ce n'est que le premier pas qui couture!"

Arithelli bit her lips. "I don't feel in the mood for arguing now. I wish you would leave me alone."

"On condition that you won't go in for any more hysterics, I'll go and settle with the Manager that you don't have to appear to-night. It's lucky there happens to be a new turn with those trapeze people. The audience won't miss you. Has Sobrenski given you anything to do to-day?"

"I don't know. I can't remember. Oh, yes, I was to go to the Baroni's at two o'clock."

"I'll see to that. A cipher message?"

"Yes. It's fastened under my hair." She

dragged herself into a sitting position and extracted the little wad of paper with shaking hands. Emile took it.

“Good! I shall be back at five o'clock. You can get up later and come round to my rooms. Do you understand?”

“Yes!”

When he had gone she cowered down into the big bed shivering. Every bone in her body ached as if she had been beaten. She had the sensation of one who has been awakened from a bad dream. Was it all real or not?

Last night and its doings seemed centuries ago. She still heard Emile's voice as if from a distance, telling the story of the lovely siren woman who had been strangled, and then the room rocked, and the walls closed in upon her.

His words worked in her brain: “*Go in for the Cause seriously. Remember it's liberty we are fighting for. A life more or less—what's that? Yours or mine? What does it matter? Do you wonder we don't make love to women? It's a goddess and not a woman before whom we burn incense. Blood and tears, money and life! Is there any sacrifice too great for her altar?*”

And she had been both frightened and fascinated.

This was what Anarchism made of men like the cynical Emile. It had never occurred to her before that even Sobrenski, whom she regarded solely as a brutal task-master, was himself a living sacrifice.

She drowsed and brooded through the day, and having arrived at Emile's room and finding it empty, she "prowled," as she herself would have expressed it, among his few belongings, for she possessed a very feminine curiosity. Under a pile of loose music she found the portrait of a little blond woman, beautiful of curve and outline, in a lace robe that could only have been made in Paris or Vienna.

The picture was signed *Marie Roumanoff*, and on the back was written "*Tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse!*" There were songs too scrawled with love-messages in Emile's handwriting.

She pored over them with a vivid interest quite unmixed with any thought of jealousy. Emile always said that no revolutionist ever wasted time or thought on women.

After all, if she were shot to-morrow who would care? She had written to her people and sent them photographs and newspapers with the accounts of her triumph.

Success was a sure road to approbation. If she had failed she would not have written.

The Hippodrome engagement could not last forever. A little carelessness, a loss of nerve, and her career would be at an end.

Sometimes when she had been singing "*Le Rêve*," she had really meant it all.

"*S'il faut, ah, prends ma vie!*"

Only a few days ago Emile had stormed at her in his rasping French, because she had, with the vehemence of youth, denounced the Anarchist leader as a relentless brute.

"You think yourself over-worked and ill-used — you!" he said as he strode up and down the room twisting his fiercely pointed moustache. "Look at Sobrenski. He works us all, but does he ever spare himself? Look at Vardri? Rich, well-born, starving at the Hippodrome on a few *pesetas* a week. I thought you had better stuff in you. Are you going to turn out English milk-and-water? You're *not* English, you say? No, I suppose you're not, or you wouldn't talk about "dirty Gentiles." If you think Anarchy is all "*Le Rêve*" you'll soon find yourself mistaken. If some of us dream dreams we have also to face actions and realities."

Perhaps the episode of Marie Roumanoff belonged to the days before he joined the Brotherhood and became an exile from his country.

She knew that once upon a time he had owned

land and estates in Russia, and Emile the Anarchist of Barcelona had been known as Count Poleski.

She kept her discoveries to herself, and when Emile returned he found her crooning over the piano. She appeared to have quite recovered her boyish good spirits, and demanded a singing lesson, for under his tuition her passion for music had developed and increased.

"It's so nice to have a change from the heat and dust and those horrible electric lights," she said. "Let's enjoy ourselves and try over all your music. What a lot you have, and it all seems to have been bought in different places. Rome, Paris, Vienna, Dieppe, London! Fancy your having been in London!"

Emile's collection of songs covered a wide field and ranged from the gypsy ballad of "The Lost Horse," to "The Bridge," in the performance of which he revelled.

Arithelli sat in a corner and rocked with inward laughter over his atrocious English, and evident enjoyment of the morbid sentiments. For in spite of her face Arithelli had a fine sense of the ridiculous.

"You don't say the words properly," she said. "You make such mouthfuls out of them!"

"And what of you?" Emile retorted in great

wrath. "You with your French all soft, soft like oil!"

"Yes, that's the Irish half of me."

"And your Italian so *raûque* so hard —!"

"That's the Jewish half of me. Oh, don't let's quarrel! I do want to learn to sing properly."

"Then don't fold your arms," her instructor said sharply. "I suppose you think it looks dramatic, but how can you learn to sing what you call 'properly,' with your chest all crushed up like that?"

CHAPTER VI

“When I look back on the days long fled,
The memory grows still dreamier.
Oh! what fantastic lives they led,
Far away in Bohemia.

“There were laws that were only made to break,
In a world that never seems half awake
Till the lamps were lit — there were souls at stake.
Far away in Bohemia.”

DOLF WYLLARDE.

BARCELONA in August was like the Hell to which Emile likened it.

The rich escaped from the heat to their villas up in the mountains, those whom business, or lack of money, kept in the city, existed in a parched and sweltering condition. Arithelli still kept her place among the performers at the Hippodrome, though after the fashion of circus artists her name had been changed.

She was now “Madame Mignonne” from Paris, and wore a golden wig, and came on the stage riding a lion in the character of a heathen goddess in the ~~spectacular~~ display which always ended the performance.

She pined for the *haute école* and trick riding in which she so excelled, and felt unholy pangs when she saw her beloved white horses being driven in a chariot by a fat, vulgar English woman, arrayed in scanty pink tunic and tights.

She was not afraid of the lion, who was old and toothless enough to be absolutely safe, but her new *rôle* was not a great success.

The golden hair did not suit her any better than did the classical draperies, and she grew daily thinner. As a matter of fact she was practically going through the process of slow starvation.

She had never, even in her healthily hungry days, been able to eat the abominable Spanish dishes — meat floating in oil, and other things which she classed together under the heading of *cochonneries*.

She generally lived on fruit, a little black bread, coffee, and *absinthe*.

Emile would try and bully her into eating more, and occasionally essayed his talents as a *chef*, and cooked weird looking things in his rooms over a vilely smelling English oil stove, but the Jewess in Arithelli found him wanting in the "divers washings" she required of the saucepans, and they generally ended these Bohemian repasts with a quarrel.

She went about her work in a half-stupefied state,

as one who is perpetually in a trance. She was past fear now. Nothing mattered. Midnight rides on a mule up in the mountains, meetings in the low quarter of the town, the danger of being arrested while carrying a despatch.

“*C'est ainsi que la vie!*” Emile's motto had become also her own.

She was once more a perfect machine. Even the only thing that Sobrenski could find to say against her was that her appearance was too conspicuous for a conspirator and that her hands and feet would betray her through any disguise.

Emile, though still outwardly as unsympathetic as ever, was not blind to the change in her looks and manner.

Putting the Cause out of the question, he did not wish “Fatalité” to get ill. Her company amused and distracted him.

He liked to hear her views on life, and to colour them with his own cynicism, and he enjoyed teaching her to sing and hearing her argue.

For all her quiet she was curiously magnetic and had a way of making her absence felt. She was never noisy or exacting and had none of the pride or vices of her sex, and though she was often depressed she was never bored, and in consequence bored no one.

They had many traits in common, including fatalism and morbidity, for the Slav temperament is in a hundred ways akin to that of the Celt.

In spite of his jeering remarks Emile thoroughly appreciated the girl's pluck, and knew that if she failed it would be purely from physical reasons.

"Iron in a velvet sheath," he had described her, and iron did not bend — it broke.

After some consideration he approached the very unapproachable Manager. "It's time you gave your leading *equestrienne* a holiday," he observed. "She's getting ill. If you don't let her have a rest soon she'll be falling off in public, or having some fiasco. She was half dead the other night after the performance."

The Manager made profane remarks in the dialect of Silesia, of which place he was a native. He was fresh from quarrelling for the hundredth time with Estelle, and was in the last frame of mind to desire rest or peace for any inhabitant of the globe.

By himself and everyone else at the Hippodrome, Arithelli was considered the property of the Anarchist, and Emile had taken very good care to disabuse no one of the idea, but had rather been at some pains to create such an impression.

For her it was the best protection, and kept her

free from the insults and attentions of other men.

Bouquets and jewellery he was willing that she should receive; they did no harm and the latter could always be sold.

In cold and dispassionate argument he explained to the irate Manager the folly of ruining good material by injudicious use.

“ You pay her as little as you can considering she is a draw. She does the work of three people, including keeping the books when you are not in a condition to wrestle with arithmetic. If you had your way she would be cleaning out the stables.”

“ Bah! ” sneered the other. “ It would do her good — take the devil out of her — hard work doesn’t hurt that type. She’s all wire and whipcord, your She-Wolf, Poleski. Has she been snarling at you? ”

“ You’d better give her a week off,” proceeded Emile, unmoved. “ The audience will be getting tired of her if you’re not careful; she has been on too long without a break. Get a fresh *artiste* and take it out of her salary. I shall give her a week’s cruise round the harbour and see what that will do.”

“ Well, try and put a little flesh on her bones,” said the Manager rudely. “ I never saw such lean flanks! She’s got the expression of a death’s head.

It's a good thing the Spanish don't care for cheerful grins or she wouldn't be here two days."

And so it came to pass that on the following Sunday Arithelli found herself sitting on the deck of a yacht anchored far out in the harbour, with the shores of Barcelona only a faint outline in the distance.

They had come aboard the previous day.

Emile had made her no explanations beyond saying that he was going to take her for a sea trip, and after her custom she had asked no questions.

The yacht, which was an uncanny looking craft, painted black and called "*The Witch*," she knew by reputation, and had often seen it slipping into the harbour after dusk. It was the property of two Russian aristocrats, friends of Emile's, who helped the Cause by conveying bombs and infernal machines, and taking off such members of the band as had suddenly found Spain an undesirable residence.

Arithelli was not in the least interested in either of the men, the dark, handsome, saturnine Vladimir, or the fair-haired, pretty, effeminate youth to whom he was comrade and hero.

But she liked their smartness and well-groomed air, and their spotless clothes, after Emile and his dirty nails and slovenly habits, and she appreciated

to the full the surrounding refinement and comfort, and enjoyed the daintily served meals, the shining glass and silver and the deft, silent waiting of the sailors.

She had been given a luxurious cabin which seemed a paradise after her dirty, carpetless bedroom, and in it she could laze and lounge in peace without the eternal practising and rehearsals and running errands that her soul loathed.

The hot sun glared down upon her, as she sat watching the racing waves.

She was a fantastic, slim, *bizarre* figure with her coppery hair, over which a lace scarf was tied, and high-heeled slippers on her beautiful slender feet.

In her ears dangled huge turquoises, showing vividly against the white skin that was coated thickly with scented powder.

The manager had told her that she must not get tanned or red or it would spoil her type, and she now "made-up" habitually in the daytime.

Her whole array was tawdry and theatrical, and utterly out of keeping with her surroundings.

The two owners of the yacht, who wore immaculate white linen clothes and canvas shoes, expressed to each other their disapproval of her whole get-up, and particularly of her clicking heels. In common with most men, they abominated an *outré* style of

dressing and too much jewellery, and above all such finery at sea.

The girl must be mad! Didn't she know that a schooner was not a circus ring? If she were such a fool Poleski should have taught her better before bringing her on board.

They agreed that he had sense enough in other things, and had certainly trained her not to be a nuisance.

After *déjeuner* Emile had hunted up the least doubtful of the French novels they possessed and sent her up on deck to get the benefit of the sea air of which she was supposed to stand in need.

"*Va t'en, Arithelli,*" he said. "You don't want to be suffocating yourself down in a stuffy cabin. You're here to get lots of ozone and make yourself look a little less like a corpse. Besides, we want to talk."

She felt very much depressed and neglected as she sat dangling "*Les confessions d'une femme mariée,*" which were virtuous to dulness and interested her not at all, in a listless hand, long and delicate like her feet, and decorated with too many turquoise rings. Below, in the cabin, she could hear the noise of the men as they argued and shouted at each other in a polyglot of three different languages.

Arithelli felt more than a little resentful. Why had they shut her out and prevented her from hearing their discussions?

The men at the other meetings had always wanted her in the room.

She had been entrusted with all their secrets and there was no question of betrayal. She knew too much about the consequences now to try that.

When Emile came up from below she asked him why he had insulted her by turning her out.

Did he not trust her, or did he think she had not enough intelligence.

For answer he laughed cynically, "I'll make use of you and your intelligence fast enough — when I want them. You were cavilling at being over-worked the other day."

Of Vladimir and Paul she saw nothing in the daytime, for they both ignored her, but in the evenings they all sat together up on deck, and Paul sang and played the guitar while Arithelli would listen entranced and faint with pleasure.

A love of melody was the birthright of her race, and the boy had a genius for music. He seemed to have but two ideas in life — that, and a devotion which almost amounted to idolatry for the older man.

They would walk up and down for hours, Vlad-

mir with his hand on Paul's shoulder talking, gesticulating and commanding, while the other, his eyes on the ground, listened and assented.

Sometimes Vladimir would speak to him in Russian with an accent that was in itself a caress, and Arithelli, who watched them curiously, noticed and wondered to see the boy flush and colour like a woman.

She always looked forward with the keenest pleasure to those evenings.

The days bored her, inasmuch as she was capable of being bored, and she hated the glare and glitter of the sun and sky.

It was too much like the blue-white lights of the Hippodrome. With night came the glamour of Fairyland, that magic country in which Ireland still believes, and which is ever there for those who seek it, "East o' the Sun, and West o' the Moon."

The yacht drifting idly at anchor in smooth water, the stars in their bed of velvet black, the magic of air and space.

The incense-like scent of Turkish cigarettes and black coffee, the little group of men lounging in their deck chairs, the resonant, full notes of the guitar, and Paul's voice rising out of the shadows.

If he had sung standing on the platform of a brightly lit concert hall half the charm would have

vanished in that distraction which the personality of a singer creates.

In the illusion of his surroundings the man himself did not exist.

There was only the voice — the singer.

Hungarian folk-songs that fired her blood and made her restless with strange longings; "*La vie est vaine*," eternally sweet and haunting; then some wickedly witty song of the *cafés*, and melodies of Gounod full of infinite charm. Last of all came always "*Le Rêve*," in which Emile and Vladimir joined as if it were some National Anthem, and which left her quivering with excitement.

CHAPTER VII

“There would no man do for your sake, I think,
What I would have done for the least word said;
I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink—
Broken it up for your daily bread.”

SWINBURNE.

WHEN the week of dreams and rest was over she went back to the Hippodrome with somewhat of relief in her feelings.

At least the work prevented her from thinking.

Though she was physically less languid, the sea air had neither succeeded in putting any more flesh on what the Manager called her “lean flanks,” nor had it made her look much more cheerful. He had the sense to let her take her place as *equestrienne* once more, and had announced her reappearance in flaming posters.

The stablemen and helpers were all delighted to see her again, and in token of their satisfaction presented her with a hideous and unwieldy bouquet, in which all colours were arranged together so as to give the effect of a kaleidoscope. They liked her

for her sweet temper and invariable courtesy, and respected her for her knowledge of horses.

Estelle came and embraced her and was voluble over the failings of her "*bon ami*," the sardonic manager.

Arithelli received a hearty round of applause as she rode into the ring on her favourite "Don Juan," whose wavy tail and mane were decorated with turquoise ribbons that matched her habit.

At least she was happy on horseback, and she loved the animals and they her.

Even the performing sheep and monkey, and the toothless lion came in for a share in her affections. She had a new and difficult trick to go through that night, but this particular sort of danger only made her feel exhilarated.

Emile's stories of blood and horrors had sickened her, but the chance of breaking her neck over a high jump held no terrors.

She made her exit, gaily waving her silver-handled whip, and Vardri, who was standing at the entrance of the ring, came forward quickly to lift her off her horse before the groom could reach her.

"You're wanted to-night in the Calle de Pescadores," he whispered, as she rested her hand on his shoulder to jump down. "As soon as possible, and go in carefully — there's a scare about spies."

He felt her body stiffen and the little smile that came so rarely died in an instant, leaving her once more "Fatalité."

She nodded by way of assent and bent down to gather up her habit.

The ring-master was only a few feet away, and they could never be certain as to who was to be trusted.

Vardri stood looking after her as she walked away with her head well up and her shoulders thrown back as usual.

The two had become good friends with the comradeship induced by the similarity in their misfortunes.

Both were young, reckless and without money beyond what they earned, though, whereas Arithelli had been more or less tricked into her present position, Vardri had been infatuated with the Cause from the time he was old enough to take an interest in anything. The worship of the goddess Liberty had left with him room also for the adoration of a human being, and in a boyish chivalrous way he had tried to make things easier for Arithelli.

He managed to bring her occasional flowers and music out of his starvation wages, and was always jealously careful of the way in which her horses were groomed and turned out. They had a curious

resemblance to each other, and when Arithelli was dressed in boy's clothes for her journeys up in the mountains, they might have been two brothers. One was dark and the other fair, but both had the same haggard, well-modelled faces, the same pale skins, and thin, supple figures.

They were exactly of a height, too, and when Arithelli disguised herself, she pushed her red hair under a sombrero and black wig.

Even Sobrenski's lynx eyes had been at fault in the semi-darkness of the hut, and he had sworn at her in mistake for Vardri. As the dresser took off her habit, she asked the woman whether Monsieur Poleski had been behind the scenes during her turn, and was there a note or message?

It appeared that there had been no sign of Emile, and she hesitated for a moment, hardly knowing what to do.

The order for her presence in the Calle de Pescadores, which of course had been sent by Sobrenski, had told her to come at once.

On the other hand, Emile had always told her to wait for him in her room till he came to fetch her. If she went through the streets alone there would be a row, and if she were late at the *rendezvous* there would also be a row.

“C'est ainsi que la vie!”

She lifted her thin shoulders after the manner of Emile and decided to start at once. She wiped all the make-up from her face with a damp towel, swaying a little as she stood before the glass.

The excitement of her reception and the ensuing episode had made her heart beat at distressing speed.

"You're not ill," she adjured her pale reflection. "It's all imagination. Emile says all these complaints are. Any way, you're not going to give in to it."

She shut both ears and eyes as she sped through the restless city that even at this hour was astir with life.

She was only glad that there was no moon. Roused for once out of her naturally slow and indolent walk, she was soon in the poor quarter and climbing the stairs to the third floor of a horrible little house, the back of which looked out on the dark slums of the quarter of the Parelelo, the breeding-place of revolutions; the district between the Rambla and the Harbour.

The house was like the one that Emile had described when telling her of the murdered woman, Féline Rivaz.

The very air reeked of intrigue and hidden deeds. She looked round first of all for Emile, but he

was not there, and only half the usual number of conspirators were assembled.

Vardri, who had left the Hippodrome the minute he had delivered his message, was sitting on the end of the table swinging his feet and whistling softly.

He had bribed one of the "strappers" to finish his work, and slipped out, only arriving a few minutes before her.

He had risked dismissal, but that was no great matter.

The Cause came first, and he feared danger for Arithelli, knowing that if there was anything specially risky to be done she would be the one chosen.

Sobrenski was always harder on her than on the others.

He watched her with the hungry, faithful eyes of an animal, and got up from his seat with instinctive courtesy. Like all the rest he wore the Anarchist badge, a red tie, and the hot, vivid colour showed up the lines of ill-health and suffering about his eyes and mouth.

In spite of his disreputable clothes and wild hair, there still remained in him the indefinable signs of breeding, in the thin, shapely hands that rested on his knee, and in the modulations of his boyish and eager voice.

None of the others took the least notice of the girl's entrance.

Nearly all of them were as well-born as the young Austrian, but to them she was simply a comrade, a fellow worker, not a woman.

She gave him a little friendly gesture and went quietly to a seat against the wall, where she sat in one of her characteristic attitudes, her feet crossed, and showing under her short dark blue skirt.

Emile had made her buy this one plain and unnoticeable garment for use on these occasions.

After she had been in the room a minute, Sobrenski turned from the man to whom he had been talking in a careful under-tone, and bolted the door.

"Listen, all of you," he said. "We have received information that this house will be watched to-night. Whether the spy is one who was formerly one of us, we do not know—yet. It appears that it is Poleski who is the suspect. They have some evidence against him that is dangerous. If he is seen coming in here to-night, they will arrest him. The next time we will change the place, but for the present all that can be done is to warn him against coming here. Fortunately he will be later than usual, because he does not leave the Café Colomb till after midnight. Someone must be sent there to

stop him. It will not do for any of us to be seen coming out, so she"—he indicated Arithelli—"must go."

Arithelli wasted no time in response. She was only too eager to get out of the abominable place, and was already half way to the door when Sobrenski stopped her.

"Not that way!" he said. "What are you thinking of? You will walk straight into the arms of the spies who are probably watching the house by this time. No, you must go by the window at the back; the rest of us will stay here all night."

"This house gives on the quay by a lucky chance," remarked one of the older men; "we should be well trapped otherwise. There are several feet between it and the water."

Vardri's eyes had never moved from the girl's face. He knew that her heart was affected, and she had told him once that she would never attempt to go on the tight-rope or trapeze because the mere thought of a height always terrified her.

In answer to Sobrenski's gesture, she moved towards the window, which another of the conspirators was cautiously opening.

Vardri pushed himself forward into the group. "She can't go down there," he said hoarsely. "It's not safe—look at the height!"

“She’ll go down well enough if she holds onto the rope.”

“The rope may break or fray through on the sill.”

“She takes her chance like the rest of us.”

“The rest of us — we’re *men!*”

“There are neither men nor women in the Cause. Do you need to be taught that now? Stand back!”

“I’ll go down in her place.”

“You will do nothing of the kind. Which of us is the leader here?”

Sobrenski had twisted the girl’s arms behind her back, and he was holding her by the wrists.

He expected her to scream or struggle, but she remained absolutely passive.

One of the men was making a slip-knot in a coil of rope.

Vardri’s blood was hot as he looked on. Blind with helpless rage, he was conscious of nothing but the little set face and defiant head. He had come suddenly into his heritage of manhood at the sight of her alone, defenceless and roughly handled by brute beasts who called themselves men.

He was mad, too, with a man’s jealousy. From the earliest moment he had seen Arithelli he had given her homage as a woman. The *gamin*, the “Becky Sharp” that Emile and the others knew, he

had never seen, and he had always resented her numerous irreverent nicknames.

He could do nothing, nothing!

Get himself shot or strangled, perhaps, and what use would that be to her?

“Come!” said Sobrenski, turning her towards the window.

For the first time since she had entered the room, Arithelli spoke: “Leave me alone for a minute. No, I won’t move — *parole d’honneur!*”

When she was released, she put out her left hand. “*Mon ami*, what’s the use of arguing? I’m the errand boy, *vois-tu?* My work is to carry messages. If you make a scene it’s only the worse for me. It’s good of you to want to go instead. I shall not forget.”

The voice, subtle and sweet as ever, the intimacy implied by the familiar “thou” acted like a charm to the boy’s wild fury. Before her courage and dignity it seemed out of place to make any further protest.

He crushed the long and lovely hand against his lips with mingled passion and reverence.

There was a red streak across the wrist.

“A fine melodrama!” sneered Sobrenski. “Keep all that for the stage, it isn’t needed here.

Allons! We can't waste any more time, there has been too much wasted already."

Vardri walked to the furthest end of the room, turning his back upon the group at the window, and thrust his fingers into his ears to deaden the sound of the scream for which he waited in tortured anticipation.

Excitable and neurotic, like all consumptives, his imagination made of those waiting moments a veritable hell.

She would never get down in safety—an old and hastily knotted rope, a disregard of all ordinary precautions, and her body in the hands of men who handled human lives more carelessly than most people would handle stones. He bit his lip till the blood ran down to his chin.

Here he stood doing nothing, he who would have been tortured to save her!

The window was shut and one of the men said: "She's down all right after all. I thought by the look of her she would have fainted. She has some pluck, Mademoiselle Fatalité!"

"Yes," answered Sobrenski. "Here's the coward and traitor."

Vardri wheeled round, looking straight into the cold eyes of his leader. He had heard the last

words. She was safe, that was all that mattered, and for himself he was reckless.

“Traitor, am I? Yes, if the Cause is to include the ill-treatment of women!”

“Women? Again women? Are our meetings to be used as love trysts. There was a certain episode two years ago — Gaston de Barrés and Féline Rivaz — you remember it? Ah, I thought so! Then let it be a warning — in the future you will be suspected and watched. There is no need for me to dilate upon the punishment for treachery, all that you knew when you joined us. You may consider yourself lucky to have escaped so easily to-night. Through the few minutes’ delay you have caused, Poleski may have been arrested.”

Vardri shrugged and sat down. Like Arithelli, he recognized the futility of mere words upon certain occasions.

Moreover, now that the flame of his indignation had died down, he had begun to feel wretchedly ill and spiritless with the reaction that comes after any great excitement.

He sat shivering and coughing till the dawn, while the other men talked in low voices or played cards. One or two slept fitfully in uncomfortable attitudes on the floor.

No one grumbled at the discomfort or weariness of the vigil.

They who looked forward to ultimate prison and perhaps death itself were not wont to quarrel with such minor inconveniences as the loss of sleep.

Sobrenski had pulled the solitary candle in the room towards him and sat writing rapidly and frowning to himself.

His fox-like face framed in its red hair and beard looked more relentless and crafty than ever in the revealing light, and the boy shivered anew, but not from physical cold.

He did not fear the leader of the Brotherhood for himself, but for Arithelli — Arithelli, the drudge, the tool, the “errand boy,” as she had called herself.

Perhaps in time even she would become a heartless machine.

Human life had seemed so cheap and of so little account to him once, but since he had loved her —

She could never live among such people and in such scenes, and still remain unscarred.

Again the little desperate face rose before him.

If they did not succeed in killing her soon by their brutalities, she would commit suicide to escape from the horrors that surrounded her.

It had never occurred to Vardri to be jealous of Emile.

With the curious insight that love gives he had formed a true idea of the relationship between the oddly-assorted pair. He had never thought of himself as her lover.

To him she was always the Ideal, the divinity enthroned.

He was content to kiss her feet, and to lay before them service and sacrifice.

Yet, though he might build a wall of love around her, he knew it could give her no protection against the realities of her present life.

She had given him dreams, and in them he could forget all other things, the things that the world calls real.

Everything had vanished as a mist — the dirty room, the chill of the dawn, his own physical wretchedness.

He heard only the honey-sweet voice, saw only the outstretched hand of friendship.

“*Mon ami*,” she had called him, he who had never aspired higher than to be known as her servant.

CHAPTER VIII

“For all things born one gate
Opens, . . . and no man sees
Beyond the gods and Fate.”

SWINBURNE.

WHEN Emile arrived at the Hippodrome, only a few minutes after his usual time, he found no one but the dresser, who was clearing away the litter of clothes, jewellery, powder-puffs and flowers.

Arithelli had vanished.

She had never before failed to wait for him, and he knew she would not have started alone without some very good reason. He questioned the dresser and found she knew nothing beyond that “La Nina,” as she called the girl affectionately, had left immediately after her last turn. She had asked if the Señor had been in yet, but hearing he had not, she had dressed and gone at once. She had not even stayed to put on a cloak, and had left her hair still in a plait, and only a *velo* over it. She had seemed in great haste (but that was always so with the English!) and had looked ill. The Señor must not be alarmed, she added, folding Arithelli’s blue habit

with wrinkled, careful hands. True, Barcelona was an evil place for one so young as "La Nina," but the blessed saints —

Emile gave her a *peseta*, and left her to her invocations. In the long passage that led from the dressing-rooms he ran into Estelle, who was just sufficiently drunk to be excitable and quarrelsome. She still had on her dancer's costume of short skirts of poppy-coloured tulle, and scarlet shoes and tights. She was further adorned with long, dangling, coral ear-rings, and a black bruise on the left side of her face under the eye, the outward and visible sign of her last encounter with the Manager.

She saluted Emile with a vindictive glare from her black eyes, and tried to push past him. She hated him in a spiteful feminine way for his complete appropriation of Arithelli, of whom, thanks to him, she now saw very little. She had quarrelled with all the other women employed in the Circus, but Arithelli had always helped her to dress, and given her cigarettes and listened to her woes.

Emile blocked the way, catching the dancer by the wrist as she attempted to slip by, leaving his question unanswered. He repeated it, and after a minute's sullen refusal to speak, Estelle stamped her foot savagely upon the floor, and collapsed into a state of hysterical volubility. No, she had seen

nothing, nothing! she protested in French. Scarcely ever did she see her little friend now, and whose fault was that? Would Monsieur Poleski answer her? As Monsieur Poleski did nothing of the kind, she continued to rage. All men were brutes! Yes, all! She had no friends now and if she did console herself — what would he have?

Emile decided that she was speaking the truth, and that there was no use wasting time in making other enquiries.

One thing seemed certain — that Arithelli had left the building. From the Hippodrome he went next to her lodgings, also with no result. He could only now suppose that Sobrenski had sent her off at a moment's notice on some unusual errand. The possibility of her having gone to the house in the Calle de Pescadores did not occur to him. According to the last arrangement they were not expected there till after midnight. It was only eleven now. He would go to the *Café Colomb*, and spend the hour there. It was no use to search for her further, and as he assured himself there was not the least reason to become alarmed. She was not likely to lose her head, and she knew her way about the place.

The *Colomb* was more or less a recognised resort of the many revolutionaries with whom the city abounded. The proprietor was known to be in

sympathy with their schemes, though he took no active part in them himself. He was considered trustworthy, for notes and messages were often left in his charge, and his private room was at the disposal of those who wished for a few minutes' secret interview. When Emile entered he was greeted by several of the men who sat in groups of two and three at little tables, busy with Monté and other card games.

The smoke of many cigarettes obscured their figures, and clouded the mirrors with which the place was lined from floor to ceiling. Emile sat down alone and ordered an *absinthe*.

When called upon to join in the play, he refused with a scowl and a rasping oath in his native tongue, and as the evening grew on towards midnight he was left to himself and his meditations.

His thoughts were still with Arithelli, the weird witch-girl, whose eyes were like those of Swinburne's fair woman,

"Coloured like a water-flower,
And deeper than the green sea's glass."

He, who now never opened a book, had once known that most un-English of all poets by heart.

In her many phases Arithelli passed before him, as he stared moodily at the shifting opal-coloured

liquid in his glass. He thought of her as he had often seen her, fighting through her work at the Hippodrome, the little weary head always gallantly carried, and then when she had dismounted and was in her dressing-room, the rings round her eyes, her shaking hands and utter weariness. He remembered her consideration for her horses, her loathing of the ill-treatment of all dumb things so common here. Once he had found her in the market-place, remonstrating in her broken Spanish with the country women for the inhuman manner in which they carried away their purchases of live fowl, tied neck to neck, and slung across a mule, to die of slow strangulation under the blazing sun. All the animals at the Hippodrome had been better treated since she had been there. It was characteristic of the man that he laughed at her to her face for her campaign against the national cruelty, and in secret thought of her with admiration.

In many ways sexless, in others purely a woman, to every mood she brought the charm of individuality.

Tiens! He was falling in love, he jeered to himself, cynically. In love with that tall, silent creature, who was never in a hurry and never in a temper, and who walked as if she had been bred in Andalusia.

Absurd! He was only interested. She had brains, and she never bored him.

Besides, she was only twenty-four, and one could hardly allow a girl of that age to be thrown warm and living to the wolves and vampires of Barcelona. Perhaps he had been wrong in letting her do some things — drink *absinthe*, for example. One lost one's sense of mental and moral perspective in a place like this. At least he had guarded her well. If he had not met her that day at the station, she might have fallen into worse hands than his own. Things could not go on indefinitely as they had been going. What was to be the end of it all?

Eventually she would fall in love, and a woman was no more use to the Cause once that happened. No vows would be strong enough to keep her from a man's arms once she cared. She would not love lightly or easily, and where would she find love, here in Barcelona?

Half unconsciously, he found himself comparing Arithelli with the woman who had betrayed him. Emile never lied, even to himself, and he knew now that Marie Roumanoff had almost become a shadow.

A plaything she had been, a child, a doll, a being made for caresses and admiration. To a woman of her type camaraderie would have been

impossible. He had not wanted it, and it had not been in her nature to give it.

A man, who had been sitting opposite, got up, gesticulated, put on his hat at a reckless angle, and, with a noisy farewell to his companions, swaggered out.

In the mirror that faced him Emile saw the quick furtive glance bestowed upon him, though he sat apparently unconscious of it.

Something at the back of his brain suggested to him that he knew the man's face, that he had seen him before. A spy probably. It was nothing unusual for any of them to be "shadowed," and for their out-goings and in-comings to be noted.

The highly gilded French clock on the mantelpiece at the far end of the room announced the hour as being a quarter to twelve. Emile stooped down to pick up his sombrero which had tumbled off a chair on to the floor, when he remained with outstretched hand, arrested by the sound of a woman's voice which came through the partly opened door of the proprietor's private room and office. A woman's voice? It was Arithelli's unmistakably.

He recovered himself and the sombrero together, and twisted round in his seat so as to get a view of the door, which was on his left hand,

half way down the long room. It had a glass top, across which a dark green curtain was drawn. Emile knew that it was possible to enter this room without passing through the *café*. There was another door which led into a passage through the kitchen and back part of the house, and from thence into a side-street, or rather a small alley.

He had often been that way, and it was generally used by the frequenters of the place when they had reason to guard their movements.

He listened again.

The voice was even more hoarse than usual and more uncertain. Though he could not hear the words, the broken sentences gave an impression of breathlessness. When she stopped speaking he heard the voice of the proprietor raised in an emphatic stage-whisper. Yes, Monsieur Poleski was within. Mademoiselle was fortunately in time to find him. If Mademoiselle would give herself the trouble to wait but for one moment —.

The little man fancied himself an adept at intrigue, and his methods were often a cause of anxiety to those he befriended. His nods and gestures and meaning glances as he emerged would have been enough to arouse suspicion in the most guileless.

He stood blinking his short-sighted eyes through

the haze in his effort to attract Emile's attention without being detected. The latter got up and sauntered towards him.

"*Bon soir, Monsieur Lefévre,*" he said carelessly. "We have a little account to settle, you and I, is it not so?"

Fat Monsieur Lefévre rose gallantly to the occasion. He bowed Emile into the room, locked the door by which they had entered, and with another bow and a muttered apology scuttled through the passage into the back regions. Two minutes later he made his reappearance in the *café* by the front way, and went to his place behind the counter with the satisfied face of a successful diplomatist.

His little sanctum was typical in its arrangement of the Parisian *bourgeois*.

Numerous picture post-cards of a famous chanteuse of the Folies Bergères proclaimed Monsieur's taste in beauty. For the rest, everything was neat and rather bare of furniture. There were chairs symmetrically arranged like sentinels along the walls, tinted lace curtains, a gilded mirror, and a few doubtful coloured pictures, all of women. An unshaded electric light flared in a corner. Ari-thelli stood resting one hand on the round polished table in the centre of the apartment. Her dark

blue dress was torn in two places, and smeared with patches of dust. The *velo*, or piece of drapery worn on ordinary occasions instead of the mantilla, hung down her back in company with the long plait of hair, which had come untwisted at the ends. Her face was strained and haggard, and the tense attitude spoke of tortured nerves.

She was still struggling for breath, and appeared almost unable to speak, but Emile was not minded to allow her much time for recovery.

Patience was not numbered among such virtues as he possessed.

“*Tiens!*” he began. “What is it now, Fatalité? You look as if you had been having adventures. Have you been getting into mischief? And where have you been?”

“In the Calle de Pescadores out at Barcelonetta. Sobrenski sent me with a message to you. The place is being watched. If they see you go in you may be arrested. The others got to hear about the spies, and went early. They are going to stay there all night because it isn’t safe to leave.” Her tone was that of one who repeats a well-learned lesson.

Emile shrugged. “Spies? So that’s it! There was a man just now in the *café* who looked like it.

Probably he is waiting to go outside now to 'shadow' me. He may wait till—! And how did you get out?"

"They let me down from a window at the back of the house. I got on to the quay and came here by the long way and through the Rambla." There was a pause, and then she said in the same mechanical voice, "Sobrenski said I was to tell you not to come. It isn't safe."

Emile did not answer. He could see that she was trembling violently and on the verge of an hysterical crisis. He rather hoped she would break down. It would seem more natural. Women were privileged to cry and scream, not that it was possible to imagine her screaming. He dragged forward a chair from the immaculate row against the wall.

As he did so he noticed that she kept her left hand behind her back as if to conceal something.

"Sit down," he ordered. "What's the matter with your hand? Are you hurt?"

The girl retreated before him.

"No!" she answered defiantly.

But Emile's quick eyes had seen a crumpled handkerchief flecked with red stains.

"Don't tell lies, Fatalité!" he said sharply.
"Give me your hand at once."

Arithelli obeyed, holding it out palm upwards.

Emile looked, and ripped out a fiery exclamation. The smooth flesh was scarred and torn across in several places, and was still bleeding. The mark of Sobrenski's grip on her wrist had turned from crimson to a dull discoloured hue.

"It doesn't hurt so very much," she said. "Only I can't bear the sight of blood. All Jewish people are like that. I can't help it. It makes me feel queer all over."

She turned her head aside with a shudder. Emile muttered another expletive, adding:

"Then if you feel like that, don't look."

He told her again to sit down, tore her handkerchief into strips, soaked them in water from a carafe, and bandaged up the wounds in a rough but effectual fashion.

She said nothing during the process, but kept her head still turned away so that he could not see her face.

"*Voilà!*" said Emile. "That will be all right to-morrow. What did they do to you?"

"I cut my fingers on the window sill when they let me down. There was a piece of iron or a nail or something. I don't remember. It didn't hurt at the time."

"H'm!" commented Emile. "But this?" he touched her wrist lightly. "It looks like —"

"That? Oh, Sobrenski did that. He—"

"Well?" said Emile. He waited but there came no answer, so he continued the interrogation. "You didn't make a scene, Fatalité?"

He heard her flinch and draw in her breath as she covered her face with her free hand. Her low painful sobbing reminded him of the inarticulate moaning of an animal.

Even in her grief, her abandonment, she was unlike all other women. Emile stood beside her in watchful silence, and neither attempted to interfere nor to console her. He was wise enough to know that to a highly strung nature like hers too much self-repression might be dangerous, and he was humane enough to be glad that she had the relief of tears.

At length he said quietly, "I didn't know you could cry, Fatalité. I didn't know you were human enough for that."

She still fought desperately for composure, thrusting a fold of the torn *velo* between her teeth. The naked light shone on her bent head, and on her glittering rope of hair.

A strange impulse suddenly moved Emile to finger a loose strand with a touch that had in it something of a caress.

Gamin she had been, *equestrienne*, heroine, and now she was only a sorrowful Dolores.

At last words came.

She stood up and faced him, shaking back her hair.

“Emile! Emile! I must give it up. I can’t go on!”

“And you can’t turn back, *mon enfant*.”

“I’ll run away.”

“Do you think they wouldn’t find you? You know enough about our organisation now. No one who has once joined us is ever allowed to escape. You would be found sooner or later, and then—you remember what I told you once? That I am responsible for you to the Brotherhood?”

He spoke calmly, patiently, as if he were explaining things to a child.

If his associates could have seen the cynical Emile Poleski of ordinary life they would have found reason to marvel!

The gesture of uncontrollable horror told him that she understood only too well. What should the upholders of the Cause care for ties, for friendships, for pity?

If she were recaptured Emile would be her executioner. He might refuse, but that would not

save her and he would be shot as well. Why should he suffer because she had lost her courage and turned traitress?

She tried to collect her senses, and to think properly. Everything felt blurred and far off. One thing alone seemed certain — that there was no way out of the *impasse*.

Emile had walked to the glass-door and unlocked it. Then he came back to her.

"It's time we were going," he said. "It will not do to be here too long. As our friend the spy is patrolling the street outside in readiness for my appearance, we will go out the other way. The Calle Santa Teresa is nearly always deserted. It's just as well you should be seen with me. They don't know yet that you are working for us, so it will look less as if I were *en route* for a meeting. But before we start, have you decided to be wise and to save me from an unpleasant duty?"

"Yes. I'll stay. At least while you are here."

"While I am here?" the man echoed. "Et alors — ?"

"Then?" She threw out her arms in a hopeless gesture. "Who knows? Who can read the future? And after all, as you have said, 'What does one life more or less matter?'"

CHAPTER IX

“Ninon, Ninon, que fais-tu de la vie!”

DE MUSSET.

ARITHELLI awoke next day in her comfortless room, and lay wondering over the waking nightmare of the past hours. Everything seemed so different in the morning. There was no thrill of excitement now, nothing to make her blood run quickly. She only felt flat, dull, stupid, and disinclined to move. How strange and unlike himself Emile had been. She had lost her nerve, raved, and threatened to run away, and he had neither sneered nor abused her. Her hand, still wrapped in stained linen, had now begun to burn and smart considerably, and was proof sufficient of the reality of her experience. Her spine and the soles of her feet tingled as she lived again through the horror of the descent from the window. She could never endure a repetition of that ordeal. Next time she would refuse and they could add one more murder to the list of their crimes.

She dragged herself up and dressed slowly. She

remembered that there was to be a gala performance at the Hippodrome that night in honour of the presence of one of the Infantas, her husband and suite, who were passing through the town, and had announced their intention of being present. For all the performers it meant more work and an extra rehearsal.

When Emile came in they shared their coffee and rolls together. She was thankful that he made no reference to her passionate outburst of the night before. He was outwardly as curt and dictatorial as ever, and neither of them discussed the affairs of the Brotherhood.

"I must go down to practise," Arithelli said after a while. "Shall you be there to-night? You know there is to be a grand performance in honour of the Royalties?"

"No," answered Emile, "I shall be busy. Besides, the Royalties will be safer if I'm *not* there! We don't trouble ourselves about these particular ones though. They're not important enough."

"I'm sorry you're not coming," Arithelli answered.

Emile ungratefully disregarded the implied compliment, and threw out a blunt, "Why?"

"I don't quite know. I think there is going to be something unlucky."

" You're going to tumble off, you mean? Better not! You don't want to get turned out, do you? "

Arithelli turned to a mirror on the wall.

" Do I look very ghastly? " she asked.

" Not much more than usual. None of us look very fresh out here, do we? Do you think your hat is on straight, you untidy little trollop? Well, it isn't! Hurry up,—it's late. No, I'm not going down there with you. I'll stay here, and do some writing."

The rehearsal that morning seemed interminable. For the first time since she had ridden in public Arithelli bungled over her tricks. She jumped short, miscalculated distances, and once barely saved herself from a severe fall.

The ring-master, with whom she was a great favourite, shook his head reproachfully at her, as he paused to rest and wipe his heated countenance. He was a greasy and affable personage, whose temper was as easy as his morals. He was more soft-hearted than most of his compatriots, and he honestly liked Arithelli and admired her riding.

" What have you there, Mademoiselle? " he enquired pathetically. " Never have I seen you like this before. You fear the grand people, is it not so? You have no heart, no courage! But again! Again! "

In the midst of his exhortation the Manager descended suddenly upon the scene. As a matter of fact he had been watching for the last ten minutes from one of the entrances, and he had seen her failure to accomplish her jumps successfully.

"This won't do for to-night," he said angrily. "We want your best work, not your worst. Do you suppose I'm going to stand your laziness?"

Arithelli was sitting at ease upon Don Juan's back as he paced slowly round the ring. She did not look up or answer, which enraged the Manager still further. Her silence was one of the things about her that always annoyed him most? She was the only woman he had never been able to bully into a state of collapse.

He turned on the ring-master, who was grinning to himself.

"*Allez-vous en!* I'll see to this."

Señor Valdez looked uncomfortable. For an instant he felt almost inclined to expostulate on Arithelli's behalf, but the Manager's rages were well known to his employés, and the little man had no intention of losing his present position. He flung down his long whip, and retired muttering vengeance.

The Manager strode into the centre of the ring, picked up the lash and drew it through his fingers.

He swore at Arithelli, he swore at Don Juan, and he started the rehearsal all over again.

Arithelli clenched her teeth and rode doggedly forward. The arena swam before her, and her limbs felt weak and heavy as those of one who is drugged, and her lacerated hand added to her difficulties. That she should presume to be ill, had not entered into the Manager's calculations. If he had realised the fact he would have said that people who were ill were of no use in a circus, and the sooner she left it the better.

The treadmill continued until Arithelli would have welcomed an accident as a break in the grinding monotony. The exercise instead of making her hot, had made her shiver as if with great cold. She felt as if she had been practising for days instead of hours. It was of no use! She could not go on any longer. She slipped from her standing position on the broad pad saddle to Don Juan's back, and without waiting for the word of command, reined him to a standstill in front of the Manager.

"You must let me go," she said. "I can't do any better now."

The Manager stepped back a pace, and dropped his whip with sheer astonishment. For an instant he stared with open mouth, then he found speech.

“ You sit there, do you, and tell me you refuse to work! You with your insolence! When you fall and that long neck of yours goes *crack* ” (he snapped a finger and thumb together in expressive pantomime), “ then I shall laugh — *nom d'un chien!* — how I shall laugh.”

Arithelli waited in silence, a faint smile curling her lips. One hand, laden with rings, moved caressingly up and down Don Juan’s silky mane. She had hitherto answered abuse with maddening indifference. Now she flung back her head and mocked him.

“ So you hope I’ll fall,” she said. “ Perhaps I hope so too. Do you think I care, that I’m afraid of breaking my neck? ”

Her voice was not raised a tone from its ordinary level, but passion and contempt vibrated in every accent. An unwilling admiration stirred the man’s dull brutality. He could dismiss her to-morrow, but he would never find another woman who would be her match for physique and endurance. Besides, others would know their value and demand a larger salary.

He pointed to the performers’ exit. “ *Allez!* ” As she rode past, Arithelli made him a little bow. It was the salute of a courteous duellist to his adversary. To his profound surprise the Manager

found himself acknowledging it, with like dignity.

At eight o'clock that evening she sat before the glass in her dressing-room and awaited the shouted summons of the impish call-boy, who respected no one on earth, and to whom she was never "Mamzelle" or "Señora," but only Arithelli. The dresser had gone out for an instant, leaving the door ajar, and a noisy burst of applause swept along the passage.

The audience was in a particularly good temper, and ready to be amused at anything. In view of the royal guests the Manager had provided several exciting novelties. There was a wonderful troupe of performing horses who did everything that a horse is popularly supposed to be incapable of doing; there was a gypsy girl from Seville with a marvellous bear, whose intelligence appeared to be of a superior quality to that of the average human being; there were new jokes, new tricks, fresh costumes.

As Arithelli rode in she heard her name called, and her state of frozen misery suddenly gave way to a hot ~~thrill~~ of excitement.

Her head went up like a stag, and her nostrils dilated. She inhaled again the familiar warm scent of freshly strewn tan and hay and animals. It had

intoxicated her as a child of twelve, when she had been taken to see a travelling circus in Ireland, and it intoxicated her now.

The seats were a packed mass of people, and in the upper places and from the royal box, bright colours flamed, and jewels and restless fans glittered and moved. In honour of the occasion every woman had draped herself in the graceful mantilla, either black or white, and even the poorest wore a scarlet or orange silk-fringed *crêpe* shawl.

The usual precautions as to detectives and a guard of soldiers had been taken, but the buxom and amiable Infanta was popular among the lower orders, so that no revolutionist outbreak was feared.

Her charities were famous, her diamonds and Paris toilettes equally so. She smiled graciously at Arithelli as horse and rider bowed before her, and pulling out a few blossoms from the bouquet that rested on the ledge, threw them into the arena. As the girl looked up and the level unsmiling gaze met hers, the older woman started back.

“*Santa Vierge!*” she muttered, hastily crossing herself. “She looks in Purgatory already, with those strange eyes!”

CHAPTER X

“The nights that were days, and the days that were nights,
Griefs and glories and vain delights,
With Fame before us in fancy flights,
We mocked each other and cried ‘All’s well’!”

LOVE IN BOHEMIA.

Of her first act Arithelli had no fear. She knew that she was safe in trusting to the skill and training of her horse to accomplish successfully all the stereotyped movements of the *haute école*. She had only to sit still and look graceful, and guide him through his paces as he waltzed, turned or knelt. She carried a whip for show, but she had never used it. A word, a caress had always been enough, and she would have been beaten herself rather than touch the beautiful creature that carried her.

In the next act it would be all different. Everything depended on her own balance and accuracy. It would be all trick work then, not riding. As she slid out of her habit and into the ugly ballet-skirts she loathed, her courage vanished and she trembled as she faced the audience for the second time, transformed in white satin and pale blue, the thinness of her neck and arms painfully apparent.

The flying rush through the air as she jumped the hurdles and gates made her feel horribly dazed and giddy, and unable to collect her senses in time for the next leap. As she descended lightly in her heelless silk slippers upon Don Juan's back after the fourth hurdle had been passed, she swayed and only by a violent effort recovered herself. Her heart seemed to be beating right up in her throat and choking her. She put up one hand and pulled at her turquoise collar till the clasp gave way and thrust the blue stones into the low-cut bodice. The band sounded louder than ever, the light danced and waved. Round and round and round again, while the ring-master's whip cracked monotonously.

The rhythm of the waltz beat in her brain as the music in some delirious dream. She wondered dully why there was so little applause now. Was she doing so badly? Once she had jumped too low and knocked against a hurdle instead of clearing it properly. The grooms had helped her by lowering everything as much as possible, but all they could do had not been able to disguise her ~~unwonted~~ awkwardness.

She would have a few minutes' rest when the clown came on, and perhaps that would help her to go through the rest of the act without an absolute breakdown.

The interlude was all too short, the signal came and she sprang up and poised herself mechanically. Again the waltz music struck up and Don Juan's hoofs fell with a soft thud upon the tan. The hurdles and gates had all been cleared successfully, and now she must dismount and let her steed go round alone while she ran across from the opposite side of the ring and vaulted from the ground to the saddle.

It was the trick she had found impossible to get through at the rehearsal, the trick she most dreaded. Everything depended on her coolness and steadiness. She must start exactly at the right time, and measure the distance with unerring precision. For the first time in her life she feared the audience. She knew too well the fickle nature of a Spanish crowd. To a performer who failed to please them they would be merciless. People who screamed aloud for more blood when the sport had been tame at a bull-fight, people who habitually tortured their animals, were not likely to show consideration to one who was paid to entertain them. They would applaud furiously one minute and hiss furiously the next.

As she stood alone, waiting, she glanced instinctively towards the place where Emile always sat, and wished he had been there. He would be angry with

her if she failed, but she felt somehow that he would be sorry for her as well. Perhaps he might even make excuses for her, for he was the only person who knew about the episode of the previous night, and her injured hand. Sometimes she had loved the swaying crowd of human beings for whose amusement she risked her life and limbs. Now she hated the eager watching faces. They only wanted to see her fall, she told herself.

She ran blindly across the open space. The next instant she was on her feet on the ground again and Don Juan had stopped short. Her upward leap had carried her on to his back, but she had not been able to keep her balance.

There was dead silence and then the hissing in the audience broke out, vehement and unrestrained.

That she had pleased them hitherto went for nothing in her favour now. She had been clumsy, ungraceful, had failed — that was enough.

Arithelli herself scarcely heard the sounds of execration, as she stood swaying with one hand over her eyes to shut out the horrible glare. She was conscious only of that and the strident noise of the band, and the sensation of choking she had felt once before. The instinct of all animals to hide themselves in the dark when ill, was strong upon her.

The fat little ring-master, who alone had the sense

to see there was something wrong, advanced and spoke to her in an agitated whisper. She gave him her hand and he led her out, leaving her hurriedly to go back and apologise to the irate spectators, and to claim their indulgence on the score of her sudden faintness.

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Would she ever get to her room, Arithelli wondered, as she struggled down the passage. It had never seemed so long before. Her hand went up to her throat again. She longed for something cool to drink to relieve the aching and dryness. It must be caused by the heat and dust of the ring, she thought.

A man's voice sounded behind her, and then hurrying footsteps. She pulled her long blue cloak round her and went on without answering or turning her head. It could only be the Manager coming to upbraid her.

An arm was flung round her protectingly and she turned with the face of a hunted animal, and looked up into the wild dark eyes of Vardri.

"What has happened? You're ill! It's no wonder. *Mon Dieu*, those brutes last night . . ."

He pulled her head back against his shoulder, dropping his voice to a murmur of exquisite gentleness. "*Mon enfant — ma petite enfant!*"

“ You saw me fall? ” she whispered.

“ The men told me when they brought Don Juan out. I didn’t see what happened. Were you hurt or only faint? ”

“ Oh, my hand? That’s nothing. Emile says it will heal in a day or two. But I felt so stupid. . . . Vardri, you don’t think I’m going to be ill, do you? I’ve never been ill in my life . . . never! ”

The boy made some incoherent answer. Her piteous entreaty tore at his heart. Every fibre in his starved body ached with the desire to give her the rest and peace she needed above all things.

What could he do without money? His own miserable wages barely served for necessities. He was only a useless vagabond, an outcast. He ground his teeth together at the thought of his own impotence.

“ Courage, little one. They will cheer you again to-morrow. They are cruel, these Spaniards, and fickle. You must not care.”

It did not seem strange to either of them that he should be holding her in his arms. After last night everything had changed. Love, Youth, and Nature were hard at work weaving the bonds that drew them together.

The fact that she suffered his caresses had given him the right of manhood to protect her, to be her champion, to fight her battles. If he could do nothing else for her, at least he could fight. For him the crown of happiness could be found in loyal service. Of love-making in its ordinary sense, Vardri neither thought nor dreamed. To have found his Ideal, the one woman, surely that was enough. The innate fastidiousness that goes with good breeding had kept his life clean, his hands unsoiled.

He had hated the other women in the Circus, and felt sorry for them at the same time; and on their side they liked him and regarded him somewhat as a fool. Their voices, their coarse expressions, their light jokes all jarred on him.

He pitied them, for their lives were as hard as his own, and when he could he helped them, for among the wanderers in Bohemia there is an ever-abiding comradeship. The element of fanaticism in his nature, which had once been absorbed by the Cause, now spent itself upon a human being.

The firm yet gentle clasp in which he held her, was the outward symbol of the love and courage that made him tense as steel. To every man there comes his hour, and his was now. Both for her sake and his own he dare not keep her with him.

That they had been left undisturbed so long was a miracle. Besides, as she was ill, the sooner she was in bed the better.

He half led, half carried her to the door of her dressing room, and she thanked him with a smile, a gesture. Her throat hurt so much that all speech was an effort.

"You must go now," she whispered. "You will get into trouble again through me."

The boy threw a quick furtive glance along the whitewashed passage. With characteristic recklessness he had forgotten that the chances of his summary dismissal were looming exceedingly near.

He had left half his work undone the previous night, he had appeared late that morning, and now he was in a part of the building to which all the grooms and stable helpers were forbidden entrance.

"You'll let me bring you home," he pleaded.

Arithelli shook her head. "You can't."

"Is Emile coming for you? You shall not go alone, that I swear!"

"Emile will send someone. They never let me go alone. If you will, you may do this. If I am not down at the stables at half-past eight to-morrow, will you find Emile and ask him to come to me. He will be there doing my work."

"And you will sleep and be well to-morrow?

To-morrow you will ride again, and there will be the applause."

Even as he spoke he knew his words were foolishness. The feverish skin, dry lips and eyes that were like burning holes in the thin oval face were signs and tokens enough for the most unseeing of men. And Vardri had suffered sufficiently himself to be able to recognise genuine illness.

She slipped from his arms.

The little dreary laugh made him shiver.

"Mille remerciements, mon camarade. I'm a failure, and failures are best left alone. C'est ainsi que la vie!"

Hers was the sole fiasco in an otherwise successful performance.

The final spectacle was a lurid representation of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

This species of scriptural tableaux was frequently given, and was greatly to the taste of the spectators.

Such scenes were regularly presented in the theatres and heartily enjoyed by the superstitious and devout populace, who found in them nothing incongruous or repulsive to their piety.

In this particular display the Manager had excelled himself, and achieved above all things a most vivid realism.

The gentleman who impersonated the patriarch Lot had a distinctly modern air, and resembled a third-rate Anarchist in depressing circumstances.

He was dark and swarthy, and possessed a ferocious expression, and on the whole suggested a caricature of Emile in his worst frame of mind.

He appeared in company with his reluctant spouse, whom he dragged along by the hand, she meanwhile obviously unwilling to leave the urban delights of the Cities of the Plain for a pastoral and dull existence in the desert, and as she was several sizes larger than her husband, she seemed likely to get the best of the encounter.

She was the same fat Englishwoman who had driven Arithelli's horses in the chariot. She was by no means young, she had applied her rouge with a lavish hand, and her golden wig was an outrage. Her airs and graces were those of a well-fed operatic soprano.

She advanced in jerks, she clutched at her plump anatomy and she rolled her eyes appealingly at the gallery, which responded with delighted yells.

In her train came a small flock of dejected-looking, but real sheep, which were seemingly inspired by sufficient intelligence to wish to avoid the coming catastrophe.

The city (or cities) was represented by coarsely-

painted scenery, and, owing to some defect in the perspective, appeared to be only a few feet from the travellers, though doubtless intended to fill the distant horizon.

The fleeing pair jerked slowly across the stage in time to subdued but brassy music from the Hippodrome band, the sheep followed, and thunder and lightning were heard and seen.

Flashes and bangs resounded, the doomed city rocked upon its foundations, and the audience joined in the uproar.

Sacks full of flour descended from Heaven and burst, converting the fleshly Mrs. Lot into the traditional pillar of salt, and the house and the curtain were brought down together.

Restored to good-humour, the audience had forgotten the disgrace and failure of their favourite *equestrienne*.

CHAPTER XI

“I am tired of tears and laughter
And men that laugh and weep,
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow and reap.
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers,
And everything but sleep.”

SWINBURNE.

IF anyone had told Arithelli that she was in for a sharp attack of diphtheria, she would have felt surprised and not very much enlightened. Her ignorance of everything connected with illness was supreme, and since childhood she had had no recollection of medicine and doctors. Her parents indulged in theories on the subject of complaints, the principal one being a large disbelief in their existence. To them anything unhealthy or ailing was an aversion, a thing to be avoided rather than pitied.

For accidents, sprains and breakages their pharmacopœia suggested and did not go beyond two ideas,—salt and water and Nature.

The Oriental strain in her character helped her

to endure where an ordinary woman would have fussed, cried, or grumbled. At home if she had had a fall or did not look her best she had been expected to consider herself in disgrace, and to keep out of the way till such time as she had completely recovered her looks and spirits.

When she returned to her lodgings, it did not occur to her to rouse the landlady and demand remedies or attentions. The walk home had been a nightmare, and now she had all she wanted — solitude and the blessed darkness. She threw off her dress and boots, and walked the room hour after hour. She still heard the brazen band, and saw the flaming lights and her ears echoed to the dreadful sounds of hissing. Sometimes she had drunk feverishly of the very doubtful water against which Emile had so often cautioned her. When it was nearly dawn she gave in, and lay huddled up on the bed, half-delirious with the pain and feeling of suffocation.

Two streets away, and in a room more squalid than her own, Vardri was also enduring his own private Purgatory. Hers was physical, his mental. That was all the difference.

Long before half-past eight he was down at the stables and there received the dismissal he had fully expected, being ordered off the premises by the

head groom, who had received directions the night before to give Vardri a week's wages, and turn him out of the place without delay. It was no use protesting. The Manager was not yet visible, and even if he had been Vardri knew there was no appeal.

There had been complaints about his negligence more than once, and of course he had been missed on the previous evening. None of the "strappers" would have reported him, but one of the clowns, a Spaniard with whom he had fought for ill-treating a horse, had seen him leaving the vicinity of the dressing-rooms, and had carried the information to headquarters.

The informer had chosen his time well, and had found the Manager raging over Arithelli's mishap, and ready to dismiss anyone with or without reason.

Vardri turned his back on the place whistling defiance, and with his courage fallen below zero. He would have liked to say good-bye to the horses, and to some of the men who were his friends. He had never disliked the actual work, and it was at the Hippodrome that he had first met Arithelli. Her misfortune and his had come together. At any other time it would not have been quite so bad. A few months ago he would not have cared whether he lost his place or not.

There had been nothing much in life then, and one could always find a short way out of it *via* the water or an overdose of something.

But now the world was changed, and he craved for Life and the fulness of Life, for he had tasted happiness and stood for a moment in the outer courts of the House of Love. He had no friends who could have helped him, and no qualifications for earning his living at any other trade or profession. He had begun life with a luxurious home, a refined and useless education, and the mind of a dreamer, an idealist. None of these things were valuable assets in his present career.

Like Arithelli he spoke several languages more or less fluently, and like her again possessed both understanding and a love of horses, but what avail were these things when he had neither money, references nor influence, and as a further disadvantage he was known to be an associate of the revolutionaries, and his tendency to consumption would keep him out of many kinds of employment.

He turned over the few coins in his hand. Just enough to keep him for a week and then — the deluge!

He waited, prowling up and down the street, impatiently until Emile appeared in the distance.

A few minutes later, the two men were at the

door of Arithelli's lodgings. The landlady met them on the stairs, hag-like in the disarray of the early morning, and evidently terrified out of such humanity as she possessed by the fear of infection. She had gone up with the early morning coffee and found Arithelli raving aloud and tearing at her throat. Her first thought had been to turn the girl out of doors, or, as she was obviously incapable of moving, to send for a priest and a nursing sister, and have her taken to the public hospital. A wholesome fear of Emile prevented her from giving utterance to these charitable impulses.

She invoked every saint in the calendar, whose name she could remember, and crossed herself with automaton-like energy.

She could not, she protested, be expected to nurse such a dangerous case of fever as this undoubtedly was. There was her son, the adored of her old age. *Santa Maria!* If he also were stricken!

Emile pushed her on one side. "I'll talk to you presently," he said in her own dialect. "If you are going into hysterics with fright you'll catch anything that is catching. If you behave sensibly you won't."

The window was fully open and the green shutters thrown back, and the fierce sunlight streamed into Arithelli's room, which showed more than its

normal disorder. The tray with the *café complet* was on the floor where the landlady had left it on her hasty stampede downstairs, half-a-dozen turquoise rings lay strewn over a little table, where they had been thrown when they were dragged off, boys' clothes trailed over the back of one chair, and a blue skirt over another. The only orderly thing visible was the immaculate row of fine kid boots, long, narrow, pearl-grey, tan and champagne-coloured.

Arithelli lay on the big bed under the faded canopy. She had wrapped herself in a thin blue *peignoir*, and her face was half hidden in tangled hair. The tumbled bed-clothes were pulled to one side and dragging on the dusty boards. She was quite unconscious of anyone's presence, and moaned softly in a strangled fashion.

The two men stood without speaking, and watched the writhing, restless figure. Vardri turned away first with a smothered exclamation. Would he always be obliged to see her tortured in some way or another? The Fates were sending him more than any man could bear to look upon.

"What are you going to do?" he said roughly in French, "I can't stand seeing this!"

Emile showed no signs of surprise at the other's manifest anxiety, possibly because his own was as

deep, though his method of expressing it was different. He felt helpless, and, being a man, resented the feeling, so by consequence his always rugged manner became even more unpleasant than usual.

"Well," he rejoined, "what can you expect in this filthy place? This street isn't so bad, but of course she has so often been down in those slums in the Parelelo. The Calle de Pescadores alone is enough to give anyone a fever. I think Sobrenski has made a point of sending her down every poisonous street in the place. Ireland's a clean country, you see, compared with this, so she hasn't much chance, and as she starves herself half the time that won't make things any better."

"She must have some woman to look after her. I suppose the landlady here will be no good?"

"Not unless you pay her.—Who's going to do that?"

"There's Estelle."

"Estelle!" Emile exploded a fierce Russian oath. "Do you want *more* hysterics?" Vardri was tramping up and down the room with the noiseless agility of an animal, his fingers mechanically at work at a cigarette.

"She must have a doctor too. Isn't there an English doctor here?"

"Probably. Do you propose to pay him too?"

The dryly sarcastic voice, the practical question brought Vardri down from the clouds to the hard facts of life. Illnesses and doctors were expensive things. He had no money, and Emile very little.

"I'll get a *Sœur de Charité* from one of the convents. She'll come for nothing. Nursing is their work. I was—I mean I'm a Catholic. She's a Catholic, too, isn't she?"

"No, she hates them. She was educated in a convent, where as far as I can gather from her own account she acquired more learning than piety. Under the present circumstances I can only suggest the horse-doctor."

"What's the use of —?"

"I believe he began by doctoring human beings, but like the rest of us out here, he is a little under a cloud. He prefers animals now. They don't tell tales. Human beings do. Besides, he's English, or rather, Irish. Better go and tell him to come up. You know his rooms. Tell him it's infectious, and he can bring up a few cigarettes for me if he feels generous. Don't trouble about your *Sœur de Charité*. I'll see that the woman here makes herself useful."

Vardri flung himself out of the room and down the rickety stairs at breakneck speed, thankful beyond measure for the relief of action.

Emile subsided into a chair and smoked furiously and meditated upon the untoward situation. Being of a practical turn of mind he began to make calculations. Vardri had told him briefly of how Arithelli had failed in the trick-riding, fallen off her horse, and been hissed out of the ring. The loss of popularity might mean the end of her career. In any case he could see she was desperately ill, and there was small chance of her being about under three weeks, and even then she would not be able to work at once. Meanwhile they had exactly two pounds a week to live upon.

Truly women added to the complications of life! He might borrow money, but that was a thing to be resorted to only in the last extremity. Most of the members of his Circle were as poor as himself or poorer. They were all bound together by the tie of brotherhood, and no one would have grudged or refused a loan, but Emile scrupled to borrow from those who were in greater privation than himself.

Sobrenski was fairly well off, but he lived like an ascetic and gave everything to the Cause; besides, Sobrenski was out of the question. To appeal to him on Arithelli's behalf would only be to give him a chance for refusal and a jeer at female conspirators.

Her turquoise rings Emile collected from the ta-

ble; and put them into his pocket; her collar of turquoise he rescued from the floor, where it had fallen when she took off her bodice. The jewels could all be turned into the money they needed so badly. Of course she had not saved a single *peseta*. Emile had the handling of her salary, and he knew that anything left over from the expenses of food and lodging went in clothes and her particular vanity, dainty boots.

She was lavishly generous to the Hippodrome staff, and there was always a certain tribute claimed from all its adherents by the Cause.

He did not hunt further for valuables. If there was either money or jewellery in Arithelli's possession it was sure to be found in quite a conspicuous place.

The varied life of the city surged to and fro beneath the window, the varied noises floated up into the room, and under the faded red brocade curtains, Arithelli turned from side to side and moaned with closed eyes. A seller of fruit passed, crying his wares.

Emile went down into the street and bought a couple of oranges, and squeezed the juice into the cup that had been destined for the coffee.

He had not the least idea as to what particular malady Arithelli had developed, but he knew that

fever and delirium always went together, and that with fever there is invariably thirst. He lifted her up and pushed the pillow higher to relieve her breathing, but he could hardly do more than moisten her parched and bitten lips. Then he "tidied" the bed with masculine pulls and jerks till it was even more untidy than before, and went back to his chair. There was nothing more to be done for her in the way of alleviation till the doctor came.

He took up a book, and tried to shut his ears and distract his thoughts. As he stared unseeingly at the printed pages, there suddenly flashed into his brain the name of Count Vladimir, the owner of "*The Witch*." Here was the very man to whom he could confidently apply for help in the present difficulties, for the Russian had made it his business in life to bestow his wealth in assisting the revolutionaries. Emile decided that he would write to-morrow, when he had acquired certain particulars as to the address he wanted.

Fatalité had done good work for the Cause, he argued, therefore let those who supported the organisation keep her till she was able to work again.

The next task he would have to undertake would be that of bullying or bribing the landlady into a promise to undertake at least some of the duties of a sick-room. The rest of the nursing he proposed

to do himself. He grinned as he lit another evil-smelling cigarette, at the thought of Vardri's proposal.

He possessed an artistic sense of the fitness of things, and the suggested *Sœur de Charité* appealed to him as being quite out of the picture. Besides Arithelli had no respect for priests or nuns; Emile remembered her inimitable descriptions of the spying "Children of Mary," and she should not be worried with either if he could help it.

Yes, certainly the incapable old landlady would be preferable to a white-capped *réligeuse*, for the latter, though not likely by virtue of her training to be scared by the physical atmosphere, would undoubtedly be appalled by the mental and moral one. Most likely she would take advantage of Arithelli's weakness to persuade her of the danger of her present way of living. The Church of Rome is never slow at seizing the chance of making a convert, and the power of the Church in Spain is a byword.

Though Emile had a profound scorn for conventions, he had at one time had his place among that class of human beings that calls itself "Society," and he knew its rules and ways as he despised its hypocrisies. He could look at Arithelli's position quite judicially, and as an outsider. The world,

religious and otherwise, would certainly not give her the benefit of the doubt.

She was young, she was possessed of a weird and haunting beauty, she had no women friends, no relations, and no companions but a set of law-breakers, all of whom were men. No one would believe that she was untouched, unawakened, that she had been treated as a boy, and her womanhood not so much respected as ignored. If anyone put the wrong ideas into her head, Emile reflected, it was sure to be one of her own sex.

Having matured his plans he descended to the kitchen regions, manufacturing impressive threats *en route*.

Here an answer to his problem presented itself, or rather herself. The landlady had a niece who came in daily to assist in household matters, and take part in a duet of feminine gossip.

She was a solid young woman of unmoved countenance, who was quite prepared to nurse the ten plagues of Egypt, providing she received sufficient remuneration. She proposed to get married at the earliest opportunity and what Emile offered her would be of great assistance in providing her bridal finery.

The two came to an agreement rapidly, and Emile climbed the stairs again, triumphant.

He began to feel anxious about the doctor. Two hours had passed and there was no sight of him. He might be out, or he might be drunk. Emile knew the little weakness of Michael Furness, and as Vardri had not returned it meant that he was still searching.

At last the horse-doctor arrived, grunting and ruffling up his crest of curly black hair. He had a large heart by way of counterbalance to his many failings, and he was interested in Arithelli, for he had come across her once or twice in the stables, and had heard various picturesque stories of her exploits. He might have been a success in his own profession, but for the two temptations that beset every Irishman — whisky and horses.

He had left his practice in the city of Cork, as Emile had said, somewhat under a cloud, and had given up whisky for the *absinthe* of the *cafés*, and had not regretted the exchange. He made his examination quickly, handling the girl with a surprising skill and deftness, in spite of his big clumsy-looking hands.

When he touched her she opened her eyes.

“*Mais, où suis je?*” she murmured, painfully dragging out the words. Then followed Emile’s name.

The doctor laid her back gently, and stood hold-

ing one of her wrists. "She thinks it's you, Po-leski! 'Tis diphtheria. A bad case, too. Shall want some looking afther. Who's seeing to her?"

"I am," responded Emile, coolly.

"The devil ye are!" The Irishman's long upper lip twitched humorously. "Well, treat her gintly then, me bhoy! You're wise to be smoking. Less chance of infection. I'll keep you company." He produced a couple of thin black cigars, and handed one to Emile.

"See, now," Michael Furness added seriously, "I may as well be telling you the truth. Your little friend there hasn't a very big chance. She's been going to bits for some time. If it hadn't been this it would have been something else. She's got a grand physique, so there's hope. If she's worse by to-morrow she ought to have an operation. Only I can't undertake it, ye see. There's the trouble. My hand isn't as steady as it was, and I haven't the instruments."

Emile nodded. He knew nothing of the operation of tracheotomy, and though he spoke English well he found it difficult to follow Michael's soft, thick, County Cork speech.

"She's a grand heap of a girl, isn't she?" continued that gentleman, regarding Arithelli with kindly eyes. He had all the Celt's love of romance,

and the ingrained reverence of the Irish Catholic for women. "This isn't the place for girls, at all, at all! And they tell me she's from the old country. Will I be sending up one of the good Sisthers to see after her, and put things to rights a bit?"

For the second time that day Emile ungratefully rejected the ministrations of the Church. He knew that no one else in Spain ever thought of employing anyone but the religious orders as nurses, but he preferred to arrange things in his own way and said so.

"Ah, well then!" said Michael amiably, "give her something to drink if she wants it. That's all. I'll look in again this evening. She'll have taken a turn then one way or the other. It's a quick thing, this."

Arithelli's ministering angels left in each other's company. Michael drifted back to his favourite *café*, while Emile betook himself to the Hippodrome to wage war with that amiable functionary, the Manager. The strife was both noisy and prolonged, and resulted in only a partial victory for Emile. With many picturesque oaths the Manager accused himself of folly unspeakable in not dismissing Arithelli at once.

She had a contract? Yes! But in it there was no allowance made for incompetence and non-ap-

pearance. It only stipulated that she should be paid for doing her work. She had not done it, and moreover she had refused to practise. That he should be expected to continue to pay her a salary even of the smallest description while she lay in bed was a monstrous impertinence.

Would he not have the trouble and expense of getting another artiste to fill her place? There must be an *equestrienne* in the programme. If she found herself taken back again to finish her time after this illness or whatever it was, then she should be more than grateful, but as for paying salaries to *employés* who did not work, why, did people consider him an imbecile?

Emile shrugged and sneered at intervals throughout this tirade. He had wisely begun by asking more than he knew he was at all likely to get, and was now obliged to be satisfied with the compromise.

Disappointment followed his search for the whereabouts of Count Vladimir. The owner of "*The Witch*" was expected back in Barcelona in a month or so, no one knew exactly when. Letters might be addressed Poste Restante, Corfu, for he was cruising in his phantom craft through those sapphire seas that lie round about the Ionian Islands.

There was nothing to do but to write and wait. One piece of ill-luck was following close upon another, and Emile felt that he needed all the consolations that his cynical philosophy could afford.

His anxiety on Arithelli's behalf was fast becoming an obsession. When she had first come into his life he had wondered sometimes how she would stand the late hours and all the hardships of a circus training, but after her one outburst she had never complained again.

He thought the sea-trip had done her good. Of course she always looked pale, but then that was her type.

He had also been impressed with the unwonted seriousness of Michael, knowing that in spite of his erratic ways the doctor understood his craft.

Emile's instinct prompted him vigorously to go back now and see how she was getting on, but he dared not neglect the work of his Society. There were letters to be written, arrangements to be made; all the usual paraphernalia of intrigue to be kept going.

He returned to his own rooms and began to write savagely, using all his will to expel from his brain the vision of the girl as he had seen her last, semi-conscious, and yet with his name on her lips.

Michael had promised to see her again at six

o'clock. It would be time enough if he also went then. Besides, the Cause came first always, and there were many women in the world. His pen tore fiercely over the paper as something whispered: "Women? Yes. But another Arithelli—?"

CHAPTER XII

“I have something more to think of than Love. All the women in the world would not make me waste an hour.”
SAYING OF NAPOLEON.

THE stolid niece blundered heavily about the room, doing things that were entirely unnecessary, and raising much dust. She was a conscientious person in her own way, and felt that she must get through a certain amount of work in return for the anticipated reward.

She banged chairs and table about, folded up scattered clothes, investigated them with much interest, and fingered and re-arranged the row of boots with muttered ejaculations and covetous eyes. She had previously contrived to get Arithelli into a night dress, had brushed her hair back and plaited it, and pulled the green shutters together to keep out the midday glare.

As she looked at the livid face patched with scarlet against the coarse linen, Maria began to feel a little perturbed. Something in the atmosphere of the room had penetrated even the brick wall of her

stolidity. She hoped the two Señors would soon return and relieve her of the responsibility of her charge.

The stillness oppressed her, for Arithelli had ceased her moaning and muttering for a merciful stupor.

As the hours went on the fever increased, and the horrible fungus in her throat spread with an appalling rapidity.

As Michael Furness had prophesied, the crisis would soon be reached, and she had everything save youth against her in the fight for life.

Maria crossed herself perfunctorily and mumbled a few prayers. Doubtless the Señora was like all the English, a heretic, and therefore, according to the comfortable tenets of the Roman faith, eternally damned, but a little prayer would do no harm, and would be counted to herself as an act of charity.

That ceremony over, more mundane considerations engrossed her mind. She could smell the pungent odour of the *olla podrida*, or national stew, insinuating itself through the half-open door, and she knew that if she were not present at the meal, there would be more than one hungry mouth ready to devour her share.

She drew a breath of relief as she marched heavily downstairs to the more congenial surroundings

of the kitchen. She had done her duty. Señor Poleski had not told her to stay in the room all the time he was away, and she could easily be back again before he came in.

Michael was the first to appear, almost aggressively sober, and carrying a small wooden box. His interest in his case was as much human as professional, and instead of wasting the afternoon, after his usual custom, loafing and drinking, he had gone, after one modest glass of the rough *Val de Peñas*, to search in out-of-the-way streets for a certain herbalist of repute.

This was an aged Spanish Jew, unclean and cadaverous, with patriarchal grey beard and piercing eyes, a man renowned for his marvellous cures among the peasantry.

He was regarded more or less as a wizard, though his wizardry consisted solely in a knowledge of natural remedies, and the exercise of a power which would have been described at the Paris Salpêtrière as hypnotic suggestion. By the aid of this he was able to inspire his patients with the faith so necessary to a successful treatment.

Michael was not fettered in any way by the ordinary conventions of a practitioner. He had neither drugs nor instruments of his own wherewith to effect a cure on ordinary lines, and what he

had seen of herbalists in Spain had inspired him with a vast respect for the simplicity and success of their methods. The wooden box contained a quantity of leaves which, steeped in scalding water, and applied to the patient's throat, possessed the power of reducing the inflammation and drawing out the poison through the pores of the skin. Of their efficacy Michael entertained not the slightest doubt.

He walked straight to the bed, and glanced at Arithelli's throat, now almost covered with white patches of membrane. There was no time to waste if she was to be saved from the ghastliness of slow suffocation.

He went to the head of the stairs and yelled lustily for Maria, whom he commanded to produce boiling water immediately, thus further adding to the reputation of the mad English for haste and unreasonableness.

Then he took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and began busily to clear a space on the table, on which he emptied the contents of the box.

All his movements had suddenly become alert and energetic. The joy of the true physician, the healer, had awakened in him at the prospect of a duel with Death, and he was no longer merely the slouching, good-natured wastrel who doctored horses at the Hippodrome.

He possessed for the moment the dignity of a leader, of the master of a situation. He smiled to himself as he moved about humming a verse of "Let Ireland remember," and swept away a *débris* of books, a rouge pot, some dead flowers, and a large over-trimmed hat.

"Shure 'tis back in the surgery again I am," he told himself, while his lean, ugly face beamed with satisfaction.

No one who knew Michael Furness had ever suspected the regret by which he was for ever haunted, regret at the loss of his profession. His rollicking manner made it impossible to believe him capable of any depth of feeling, and he had a trick of talking least about the things for which he cared most. The failing that banned him from his work was an inherited one. He suffered for the sins of his fathers, for the indulgences of many generations of hard riding, hard living, reckless hot-blooded Celts. He was too old to reform now, he would say. Perhaps later on he would be "making his soul"; in the meantime he drifted.

Emile, Maria and the boiling water all made their *entrée* together. The eyes of the former travelled first of all to the bed and then to the heap of vegetation.

"*Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?*" he demanded.
"She is better, eh?"

"No, she's worse," answered Michael. He seized upon the leaves and began to bundle them into the steaming basin.

"We shouldn't have been gone so long. What's this did ye say, Poleski? Well, 'tis the only thing I can do for her. After I left you I went and got these. They're great believers in herbs in this counthry, and by the light of what I have seen, so am I. The poor people never use anything else, and I've seen some fine cures. It's unprofessional, but it's giving her a chance and as I told you I can't operate." He withdrew his fingers hurriedly.

"Faith, that jade with the dark eyes knew what she was doing when she made this water hot! They're ready now, and I'll want a piece of stuff to lay them on. Find me a piece of the colleen's finery, something old that she won't be wanting to use any more."

He pronounced the last two words as "ANNIE MOORE," and would have been furious if the fact had been pointed out to him, for like all Irishmen he would never admit the possession of a brogue.

A pale blue silk scarf was found, and ruthlessly utilised as a bandage. Then Emile lifted the inert

figure, while the doctor wound it round her throat and fastened it securely.

"Lift her higher, man," he adjured Emile.

"There's only one pillow? — Then use this." He rolled up his coat, and put it behind her head.

"We've done all we can now, and must just wait till this begins to draw. It will make her uncomfortable, and we must watch that she doesn't pull it off. Give me a cigarette if ye have one, Poleski. 'Tis hot work this."

He sat down on the bed and took up Arithelli's thin wrist. In his shirt sleeves, with his hair well on end, and his robust voice very little subdued below its usual pitch, Michael did not convey the impression that he was capable of taking either Life or Death in a serious spirit. He talked on gaily, in no way depressed by his unsympathetic audience, telling tales of his own escapades in the matter of fighting and love-making, of wild midnight steeplechases ridden across unknown country, and the delights of the fair town by the river Lee.

Once he stopped talking for a few minutes to boil some more water on the stove that Arithelli sometimes used for making coffee, and to renew the application of leaves. The fact that his patient was in exactly the same condition of stupor, and had not

stirred, did not discourage Michael's optimistic views of her recovery.

"Ye must give it time, me bhoy," he told Emile. "There's no hurry in Spain, ye know, with anything. Be careful that ye watch her and keep her hands off her throat. She'll not be lying so quiet presently."

Emile growled out an inaudible response. He was in a smouldering condition of wrath and impatience. Reserved and limited of words as he himself always was, and now rendered savage by anxiety, he found it impossible to understand the other man's mercurial temperament. By this time he was without hope, and certainly without faith in either Michael or his remedies.

The doctor having skilfully extracted his crumpled outer garment from under Arithelli's shoulders, regretfully prepared to depart. He was obliged to be somewhere about the premises of the Hippodrome during every performance in case of accident to any of the animals, and careless as he was where his own benefit was concerned, he had sufficient wisdom to be always within call.

When he had vanished Emile walked to the window, and threw open the now useless shutters. He guessed instinctively that Arithelli needed more air,

and he had himself begun to find the temperature almost unbearable, for the building was lofty, and the room they were in near the roof. He rested his folded arms upon the sill and leaned his head and shoulders far out.

The house stood at a corner, and while the side of it was in a small street, the front overlooked one of the many wide and beautiful *paséos*, with which the city abounded.

A little breeze borne of the incoming tide in the harbour came sweeping along, and its coolness stirred him into fresh vitality.

It was the hour of pleasure, when the inhabitants threw off their sun-begotten sloth and thronged the *cafés* and public gardens and promenades.

On the Rambla, once the bed of a river, the military bands played waltz music, and the favourite operas, and hot blood moved faster to the unfailing enchantment of the Haberñera, and the newest works of Massenet and Charpentier.

It was now dark, and the stars blazed down upon the never-resting city, with its sinister record of outrages and crimes, and its charm which was as the alluring of some wild gypsy queen.

Men fleeing from the justice or vengeance of their own country could find here a City of Refuge.

Here the tide of life ran swiftly, and churches and cruelty walked hand in hand, and Hate trod close upon the heels of Love.

Here no man's life was safe, for from time to time an epidemic of bomb throwing would break out. Infernal machines would be hurled in an apparently purposeless fashion wherever there was a large gathering of people in street or square. A few policemen, soldiers, or onlookers would be killed or mutilated, and a panic created, but few arrests were ever made. The whole of the Press would unite to lift up its voice in an indignant appeal to the Government, and then everything would be forgotten till the next explosion. People in Barcelona lived from day to day and accepted lawlessness as a matter of course.

Emile's own particular circle had no hand in these promiscuous destructions of life. Their own attempts were invariably well organised and directed towards some definite end. They did not destroy life for mere wanton cruelty, and their victims were marked out and hunted down with an accurate aim.

It suddenly occurred to Emile that during the last few months he had looked upon Barcelona with a changed vision. He had always seen her beauties and hated them, as a man may hate the fair body of

a despised mistress, while he yet sees it fair. Now the thought that he might at any time, and at a few days' notice, be forced to leave the place, struck him with a feeling of blankness and desolation.

The sense of exile was almost gone, the nostalgia for his own land no longer keen. Had he turned traitor to his own country, the country for whose woes he was now suffering — ?

There he had neither home, parents, friends nor lover. Here he possessed at least interests.

A rustling sound behind him made him turn quickly. In the gloom he could only see the outline of a white moving figure. He groped for the matches, struck one and lit a candle.

Arithelli sat upright in bed; she had pushed back the clothes, and her long fingers were dragging at the blue scarf. It was knotted at the back under her plait of hair, and she had almost succeeded in loosening it. The fatal inertia was passed, and she was beside herself with heat and pain and the fight for breath.

A couple of strides brought Emile to the bedside. He caught her hands between his own and drew them down.

“ Listen, Arithelli,” he said quietly. “ You mustn’t do that. This is to cure your throat. It

may hurt you now, but to-morrow you will be better, *voyez-vous?*”

The girl writhed in his grasp, turning her head from side to side. The wild eyes, the tense, quivering body, made Emile think of some forest animal in a trap.

The bandage had fallen from her throat and therefore was useless, and the aromatic scent of the crushed herbs was pungent in the air. He remembered Michael’s injunction, “See that she keeps it on. It’s her only chance.”

She was still struggling frantically, and he needed both hands. For a moment he meditated tying her wrists together, but he decided to trust to his influence over her to make her do as he wished, she had always obeyed him hitherto, and he knew that she was perfectly conscious now, and capable of understanding what he wanted.

He set his teeth and tightened his grip, and spoke again in the same quiet voice.

“Look at me! That’s right. Put your hands down, and keep them so. You must not touch your throat.”

He held her eyes with his own as he spoke, and after a momentary struggle and shrinking she grew quiet, and he felt her body relax. Her eyes closed

and she sank down against the pillow, turning her face towards him.

"*Pauvre enfant!*" Emile muttered.

He released her hands and they lay still, and she made no movement to hinder him as he re-adjusted the bandage.

He stood looking down upon her. A vast compassion shone in the grey eyes, that she had only seen hard and penetrating. The gesture of mute abandonment, the ready compliance had appealed to his complex nature, which he kept hidden under an armour of coldness and cynicism. For an instant his years of outlawry and poverty were blotted out and he had gone back to the days in Russia when he had first come into his kingdom, and had believed women faithful and their honour a thing on which to stake one's own.

As sweet and yielding Marie Roumanoff had seemed when she had lain in his arms. A few years hence if Arithelli did not succeed in breaking her neck in the ring, she would probably also make Paradise and Hell for some man.

He could see that the dangerous crisis was over. She would live and eventually go back to her work again. The swift intelligence, the wit and charm of her — *À quoi bon?* She had been saved, and

to what end? For a dangerous and toilsome profession, and, in secret, another and still greater peril.

Husband and children, and the average woman's uneventful, if happy, fate could never be hers. Her very beauty was of the type almost repellent to the strictly normal and healthy man.

She would no doubt have her hour of triumph, of passion. Some *connoisseur* of beauty would purchase her as a rare jewel is bought to catalogue among his treasures.

In Paris she might achieve notoriety. Not now, perhaps, but later when she had developed into a woman and knew her own power. Paris loved all things strange, and gave homage to the woman who was among her fellows as the orchid among flowers.

“*FATALITÉ*,” he had named her in jest. Truly a name to bring misfortune to any woman. Her fate had been in his own hands a few minutes ago. He could so easily have denied her her chance, her chance of life. Perhaps the time might come when she would reproach him for having helped her to live.

He thrust back the thought and stooped over her.

“*Mon enfant*, do you want anything to drink? You are thirsty, *n'est ce pas?*”

“Yes. And Emile — you won't — go away — yet?”

“Ma foi, no! Drink this and go to sleep.”

He was the Emile of every-day life once more, brusque, blunt and practical. As he turned away to put the glass back on the table, he was debating whether it would not be wise to call up Maria. A woman would understand better what to do for another woman. He knew that Arithelli would never ask for anything under any circumstances.

He had taught her too well his own depressing theory that life “mostly consisted of putting up with things,” and in practice thereof the pupil had outshone her master.

The rigid tension of her arms and hands as they lay on the coverlet told of her effort for composure, and he noticed for the first time that beautiful as the latter still were in shape and colour, one of the nails was broken, and the finger tips had spread and widened. When there had been meetings up in the hills at night she had always been left to see to the unharnessing of the horses and mules, and these disfigurements were the result of her struggles with saddle-girths and straps. Her work was usually well done, and if it did not happen to be satisfactory, she came in for the united grumbles of the whole party.

Emile bit into his cigarette as his eyes caught

the discoloured lines of Sobrenski's sign-manual on her wrist.

It was entirely through him, Emile, that she had in the first place joined the league of conspirators, and this was one of the results. Sobrenski's judgment had been more far-seeing than his own. One girl in a roomful of fanatics, (he was one himself, but that did not make any difference,) would naturally stand a very poor chance if she was foolish enough to oppose them.

With masculine thoughtlessness Emile had set the candle close beside the bed, where it flared full into Arithelli's eyes.

They were wide open now. The look of desperation had faded, and there was in them only the appeal of one human being to another for help and sympathy.

“Eh, bien, Fatalité?”

She shifted her position wearily and stretched out her hands towards him, murmuring, *“Je veux dormir.”*

If Emile had possessed either chloroform or any other narcotic he would at once have given it to her without much thought of the possible consequences. An inspiration seized him to use the power for soothing and alleviating provided by Nature. He knew that Arithelli would be an easy

subject for the exercise of animal magnetism, and her morbid condition would make it even easier for him to send her to sleep.

He moved away the candle, so as to leave her face in shadow, and leaning forward he laid his hand across her forehead and eyes, and began a series of regular and monotonous passes, always in a downward direction. Once he rested his thumbs lightly on her eyeballs, remaining so for a few seconds, while his will went out to her, bidding her sleep and find unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XIII

“There is a woman at the beginning of all great things.”
LAMARTINE.

THE whizzing rush and discordant scream of the electric trams, the sun warm upon his face, aroused Emile from a restless, fitful sleep of a few hours. The street cries had begun to swell into a volume of sound, and at the earliest dawn the whole place teemed with stir and life. There was no hour in all the night in which Barcelona really slept. Some of the shops did not close before midnight, and people were continually passing through the Rambla, and entering and leaving the *posadas*, which were open for the sale of wine and bread soon after three o'clock in the morning.

Emile yawned and stretched, and pulled himself up slowly from the chair by the open window in which he had fallen asleep. He was cramped and stiff from his uncomfortable position. Anxiety and strain had deepened the lines on his face, and his eyes were dull and sunken. He looked less hard,

less alert, and altogether more human and approachable.

A glance at the bed assured him that Arithelli was still asleep and in exactly the same attitude as he had left her. Though her sleep was not a natural one, at least it was better than drugs, and he had given her a respite, a time of forgetfulness. In a few minutes he would have to arouse her again to more pain and discomfort, and the inevitable weariness of convalescence. He stood inhaling the wonderful soft air and gathering up his energies to face the work of another day. Arithelli's affairs had to be put straight, and Vardri provided for in some way. He did not in the least know how this was all to be accomplished, and at present the problems of the immediate future seemed likely to prove a little difficult.

He was not by nature optimistic, and the events of the last few days had made him even less so than ordinary. He felt that he must go back to his rooms, and finish out his *siesta* before he could work out any more plans.

Arithelli awoke at once when he touched her and called her name, but before she had realised where she was Emile was half way downstairs in search of Maria.

'As it happened it was Sunday morning, and being

at least outwardly devout, the damsel was just on the point of starting for an early Mass, and was arrayed in her church-going uniform of black gown and *velo*, and armied with missal and rosary.

Her round eyes widened and her round mouth grew sulky when she heard that she was expected to go upstairs without further delay and attend to Ari-thelli. Juan would be waiting for her outside the church door, Maria reflected, and perhaps if she did not come he would seek others. There was Dolores, of the cigarette factory, for example. The English Señora could surely wait a few minutes. Her expression, and her obvious unwillingness, supplied Emile with material for cynical reflections upon the working value of religion. He did not trouble to communicate his views to Maria, but merely gave orders and instructions. His tone and manner were convincing. Like all the rest of her sex Maria respected a man who knew what he wanted, and showed that he intended to get it.

Emile made his way into the cool, shady Rambla, where a double avenue of plane trees met overhead, and where a grateful darkness could always be found even at mid-day. On either side of the promenade were the finest shops, the gaiest *cafés*. A band of students passed him, waving a scarlet flag

and shouting a revolutionary *chanson* of the most fiery description. Emile scowled angrily. He had not the least sympathy with these childish exhibitions of defiance, which he considered utterly futile and a great waste of time. They did harm to the serious aims and intentions of the Anarchist community, and were often the means of getting quite the wrong people arrested.

At the Flower Market (La Rambla de las Flores) he paused to look at the heaped roses, gorgeous against the grey stones. Daily they were brought there in thousands, dew-drenched and fresh from the gardens of Sária. He took up a loose handful from the piled mass of sweetness and laid it down again.

Red roses were not for Fatalité. They would not suit her, and she had good reason to loathe the colour that was symbolical of blood and sacrifice. He chose instead a sheaf of lilies, long-stalked and heavily scented, and despatched them in the care of a picturesque *gamin*. Sobrenski and the others would certainly have considered him hopelessly mad if they had known. It was many years since he had sent flowers to a woman. His present life did not encourage little courtesies and graceful actions. It was in the natural course of events that all the comrades should help one another in every possible

way, but none of them made any virtue out of it. It was all done in the most matter-of-fact way possible. As he had told Arithelli when they had talked up at Montserrat, one only kissed the hands of a Marie Spiridonova. And he was sending bouquets as to some *mondaine* of the vanished world and of his youth.

He shrugged and walked slowly on. In passing the house where Michael Furness lodged, he stopped to leave a message as to Arithelli's condition, and the advisability of another visit.

When "*The Witch*" touched at Corfu for letters Count Vladimir found among them one that twisted afresh the thread of two destinies — his own and that of a woman. His companion had still the same features and colouring of the boy who had sung at night under the stars in the harbour of Barcelona. Pauline Souvaroff still sang through the hours between dusk and dawn, but her disguise had been discarded, and now soft skirts trailed as she passed, and the cropped fair hair had grown and twisted into little rings. Her secret had been no secret to Emile, though Arithelli with her trick of taking everything for granted had never guessed that Paul, the singer, was other than the boy he professed to be. Besides the two women had never talked together alone, and seldom even seen each

other by daylight, for Pauline had sought no one's company.

There was for her but one being in the world, and when she could not be with the man she worshipped she was content to be with her thoughts and dreams.

At first she had, like many another Russian woman, yearned to make an oblation of herself in the service of her horror-ridden country, but with the coming of love she had put aside all thoughts of vengeance. The Cause was identified for her with the person of her lover. She toiled willingly at it still, but from entirely different motives. His interests were hers, and while he worked for the revolutionary party, so also must she.

Pauline Souvaroff had loved much and given freely. All that she possessed of beauty and charm, her whole body and soul she had laid at the feet of the man at whose lightest word she flushed and paled, and on whom she looked with soft, adoring eyes. She lived in dreams, a life of drugged content in which there was neither past nor future.

In all the Brotherhood no one could be considered a free agent, and the ordering of no man's life was in his own hands. The private actions of each member were almost as well known as his public ones, for each man spied systematically upon his

companions. If the devotion of two people to one another seemed likely to outrival their devotion to the Cause, then separation came swiftly. Nothing would be said, no accusations made, but each would receive orders that sent them in opposite directions. The supporters of the Red Flag movement were always particularly ingenious in arranging affairs to suit themselves. An Anarchist could form no lasting ties. Some time in the future there was always separation to be faced.

It was in Vladimir's power to settle matters in his own way by ignoring Emile's letter, and remaining where he was in enjoyment of the present idyll. As long as they kept out to sea they were safe. But he had pledged his word to answer any summons and to give his help, and with him, as with all men, love came only second to his work. Emile had also explained Vardri's position, and it would be impossible to adjust anything without being on the spot.

He read the letter over again, slowly and carefully. It hinted and suggested more than it had said. Emile had just come from an interview with Sobrenski, and there had been a talk of an entire re-organization of the band. Some of the members would be required to carry on the propaganda

in other countries, Russia, for example. They all knew what that meant — !

As he climbed the ladder by the yacht's side, and swung himself onto the deck, the girl ran up to him with outstretched hands, her white skirts fluttering behind her in the wind. She was as incapable of disguising her feelings as a child, and she was a joyous pagan in her happiness.

Vladimir slipped his hand under the warm round arm. "Have I been long, *petite*? Come and walk up and down. I want to talk to you."

"You have found letters, *mon ami*?" Pauline asked carelessly.

"From Poleski. Yes. I'm afraid they are rather important ones. We shall have to talk them over later on."

"When you like. Vladimir, do you remember the girl Monsieur Poleski brought on board once for a few days. I never knew her real name. She always looked so ill and miserable. Do you remember?"

"It is about this very girl that he has written."

Pauline looked up quickly. "She is dead?"

"No! No! I suppose you think that because she always looked such a tragedy. However, she is very ill, out of danger now, but of course not able

to ride — she was in the Hippodrome, you know — and apparently she has no money, so one must do something for them. Poleski has barely enough for two, especially under these circumstances."

"I am sorry," Pauline said gently. "I remember how she used to sit all day and look at the sea. Monsieur Poleski left her too much alone, and always spoke so roughly, but I think he loved her."

Vladimir gave a short laugh.

"You're wrong there, child. No, I'm sure that's not the case with Poleski."

"But she loves him?"

"Possibly! She always seemed to me uncanny with those extraordinary eyes, and that voice. Poleski has certainly failed to educate her as regards taste in clothes. You saw how she was dressed when she came on board —!"

Half an hour later the anchor was up, and they were cutting through the white-crested waves. The girl pointed to a green headland on the left that rose suddenly and overhung the water like a sentinel on guard.

"I have been watching that all the morning in the distance, and I could think of nothing but the Winged Victory in the Louvre. You remember how she stands on a rough-hewn pedestal at the head of the marble staircase, and she is all alone

against a dull red background. And as one looks one goes back all those centuries, and sees her as she was on the day the Greeks set her up to celebrate their great sea-victory. It must have all looked just as it does to-day, those centuries ago in the Island of Samothrace. There was a strong wind blowing, and the waves met and raced and leapt together, and the sky was the same wonderful colour that it is now, and there were wild birds hovering and screaming round her."

"What will you say to me, when I take you away from all this,— when we have to go back to Barcelona?"

"But I shall go with you?" The blue eyes were searching his face, and there was fear as well as a question in them.

"Do you suppose I shall leave you here alone, child?" He hated himself for the evasive answer.

He turned her thoughts to other things, bidding her talk of those days they had spent together in Paris. She had named it Paradise, and to her it had been indeed a place of enchantment, for she saw it for the first time, and Vladimir was always with her.

She had seen its treasures of art, and abandoned herself to its glamour with the enthusiasm and the freshness of a child.

She had looked out of place in the artificial atmosphere of the boulevards, among the gas-lit *cafés*, dazzling shop-windows, *flâneurs* and gaily dressed women. A man who wrote poetry, and starved on what he received for his verses in the Quartier Latin, had stood beside her for a few moments in the Rue de Rivoli, and had gone home to his garret inspired to produce some lines in which he compared her to the delicate narcissus blooms that died so quickly in the flower sellers' baskets.

Together she and Vladimir had strolled among the wonders of the Louvre, he critical and unmoved, but indulgent and gratified at her pleasure as at the pleasure of a child.

Pauline had never been able to express what she felt. She could only worship dumbly before the changeless unfading beauty of these relics of the fairy-cities, of Athens, and Rome, and Alexandria. She had loved the Greek marbles best. The weird shapes in the Corridor of Pan, the glorious torso of the Venus Accroupie with the two deep lines in her side that make her more human and alive than any other Venus, more divine even than the Milo, faultless in her "serpentine beauty rounds on rounds," serene and gracious in the shadow of her crimson-hung alcove.

And Vladimir was wise, for he allowed her to

dream, and did not show her more than he could help of modern Paris.

From there they had gone to Brussels, then to Vienna, and last, and most beautiful of all, Buda-Pesth, the city among the hills. They had seen it first of all as Buda-Pesth should be seen, at night, hanging between earth and sky, and with her million lights sparkling against the soft darkness of the surrounding hills. Pauline's eyes had never become satiated with the sight of beautiful things.

Perhaps, as she had told Vladimir, it was her love for him that had given her this gift of clear-seeing. Without love she might have allowed herself to be blindfolded as many other women are, by ambition, or money, or intellect.

CHAPTER XIV

“La vie est vaine,
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine,
Et puis bon jour.”

IN the process of Arithelli's convalescence, comedy fought for place with tragedy.

For the first time in her life she felt irritable, and inclined to grumble, and her racked nerves made the lonely hours appear doubly long and lonely.

Day after day, each one seemingly more unending than the last, the sun poured into her room, and the dust and litter accumulated in all four corners, and she lay and gazed at the hideous meandering pattern of the stained wall-paper, and the cracks and blistering paint on the door. The nights were less terrible, for the darkness veiled all sordid details, and there was a star-lit patch of sky visible through the open window.

The attendance she received could only be described as casual. Neither Emile nor Maria possessed one idea on the subject of hygiene between

them. The methods of the former were, as might be expected, a little crude, and Maria combined a similar failing with a vast ignorance. Moreover, she was not original. At the beginning of Arithelli's illness pineapple juice had seemed to Maria a happy inspiration, and she continued to provide it daily. What was good to drink on Sunday, she argued, must also be good on Monday.

Arithelli's throat had healed quickly, but the depression and weakness clung to her persistently. She fought it and was ashamed of it, true to her Spartan traditions, but was forced to realise that it was not in her own power to hurry her return to the world and work.

Michael Furness, who was much elated by the success of the Jewish herbalist's remedy, continued his treatment on the same lines, giving her various *tisanes* of leaves and flowers, which if they tasted unpleasant were at least harmless. He had grown fond of his patient, and she always looked for his visits with pleasure. He treated her with a genuine, almost fatherly kindness, and they were drawn together by the kin feeling of race, so strong among all Celts. In many respects Michael was not ideal as a medical attendant.

He smoked vile tobacco,— he dropped some things and knocked over others, he shaved appar-

ently only on *festas*, and if he happened to arrive late in the day his speech was thick and his manner excitable.

Upon one occasion Arithelli had complained that her mane of unintended hair made her uncomfortably hot, and Michael brought out a pocket knife, clubbed it all together in his hand like a horse's tail, and obligingly offered to relieve her by cutting it off. Emile had arrived only just in time to prevent the holocaust, and the two men exchanged fiery words for the next ten minutes.

Another day, prompted by a desire to amuse her, Michael introduced into her room a fat mongrel puppy with disproportionate legs and an alarmed expression. His wish to provide her with what he was pleased to call a "divarsion" was, like many of his other good intentions, not entirely successful. He had deposited the excited animal on the bed, and in the course of its frantic gambols it overbalanced and fell sprawling to the floor on its back. The ancient canopied bed was high, and the puppy was frightened as well as hurt, and lifted up its voice in anguished yells. When Michael had rescued it, and put it outside the door and finished laughing, he came back to find Arithelli weeping helplessly with her face buried in the pillow. His alarmed suggestion that he should fetch Emile helped her

to recover more quickly than any amount of sympathy could have done.

Sometimes there were other visitors. The grooms and strappers from the Hippodrome came often to enquire, and Estelle, forbidden by the Manager to come at all on account of infection, sat on the stairs and showered effusive speeches in a high-pitched voice through the open door.

Arithelli had sent no word of her illness to her parents in London. She knew their views on the subject of complaints. They would consider the whole thing due to imagination, there would be unpleasant letters, and it was perfectly certain that they would send no assistance in the shape of money. Emile had wished to write, but she had begged him not to do so, and for once he had yielded to what he called her "whims."

From the scraps of information she had received from time to time it appeared that the uncomfortable *ménage* of her kindred had become even more disorganised. Her father had turned for consolation to the whisky of his country, her mother spent whole days in bed reading, and weaving futile dreams of a recovered fortune, and Isobel and Valerie grew taller and hungrier, and fought and wrangled after the manner of Hooligans. Lazy and shiftless, they envied Arithelli the life she had

chosen, but had neither the pluck nor the brains necessary to emulate her example.

Emile's manner had troubled her of late, for he had been strangely bad-tempered and variable in his moods. She had become more or less accustomed to his eccentricities of behaviour and speech, but this was something different, indefinable. One day he would be extraordinarily kind and considerate, the next almost brutal, either hardly speaking at all, or else finding fault with everything she said and did.

She often felt a presentiment that he had something important to tell her, but he would come and go without imparting any news, and, as always, she did not worry him with questions as many women would have done.

She wondered if he were feeling harassed over "*les affaires politiques*," or whether he was afraid that the Manager's small stock of patience would be exhausted before she was able to appear in the ring again, and that he would cancel her contract. If that happened she felt that the end of all things would have indeed arrived. She could not struggle against the Fates any longer, obviously she could not return home, and it was not fair that Emile should continue to keep her.

He came in one evening about eight o'clock to

find her up for the first time since her illness, and sitting on the edge of the bed draped in the long blue cloak she used for covering her circus attire.

Her hair was parted over her ears, and divided into two long sleek braids drawn forward and falling over her shoulders, the ends resting on her lap.

She looked up, as he entered, with the haunting sea-green eyes that showed larger than ever in contrast to her hollowed cheeks. Something in her pose, in the arrangement of her hair, reminded Emile vividly of her first morning in Barcelona, when he had come in early in the morning to find her dazed with sleep. He remembered also how she had asked him to repeat his remarks, and how carelessly nonchalant had been her manner.

"You look like a witch sitting crouched up there, Fatalité," he snapped. "What's the matter? You don't seem very cheerful."

"I don't feel very cheerful," the girl responded. She spoke with grave deliberation, and without moving a muscle. Emile grunted and sat down.

"There has been another explosion of bombs on the Rambla," he said. "A market woman killed and two work people injured—I believe one has since died. Of course a got-up affair of the Government. They hope by doing this sort of thing

often enough to make the populace take vengeance on us."

"Then the Anarchists didn't do it?"

"My dear Fatalité, we don't blow up harmless people simply *pour passer le temps*. I've told you that before, and being inside the movement yourself you ought to know. It is a favourite trick of the officials to excite public feeling against us. They have been doing it now for the last three years, letting off bombs in various parts of the city. They take care always to choose the most frequented places and to kill someone who doesn't matter, and then all the Republican journals have four columns of indignation with large head-lines, 'LATEST ANARCHIST OUTRAGE.' They like to get their exploits well talked about. Everything seems to be against us now. Sobrenski will have it that there is treachery inside our circle as well as outside. You know whom he suspects?"

"No."

"Vardri."

"That is my fault," Arithelli said quietly. "Sobrenski has felt like that since the night Vardri made a scene about my being lowered down from the window. He just stood up for me because I'm a woman. I'm only a machine to the rest of you."

She spoke without a touch of resentment. It was purely a statement of fact.

"Ah, that's just the point. The feminine side of you is exactly what we don't want. One Féline Rivaz is enough, most of us think. Try and keep the elfish boy you were when you arrived. It will be less trouble, Fatalité, *ma chère*. With the other thing there are always complications. No, I'm not accusing you of falling in love with Vardri. I only say, be careful. Even an elf-child can develop suddenly into a woman once she arrives at a knowledge of the fact that there is a man ready to make love to her. Perhaps you do not know it yourself, but you have changed lately. You are losing your fearlessness, your indifference. I have watched you sometimes when you have not known, and have seen your eyes soften, your face change. You started when I spoke just now."

"How did you learn things about women? From books?"

"Books? *Ma foi*, no! I liked them well enough at one time, when I hadn't studied *la vie*. Now they're *fâde*."

Arithelli was silent for a little while. She knew only too well that Emile had spoken the truth, had put into blunt words what to herself was only a vague, half-formed idea. Her illness had been Var-

dri's golden harvest time, for it had given him the chance of being often alone with her. He had read to her, waited upon her, served her with the utmost chivalry and devotion. He had made of her a Madonna, a goddess, she who was fair game for all other men in Barcelona.

Emile's voice broke in upon her meditations.

"You shouldn't worry, Fatalité. It's not becoming. Have a cigarette to make yourself a little distraction."

She shook her head.

"No, thank you, Emile. I never wanted to smoke, and any way it would not give me a distraction to-night."

"Then what are you worrying about?"

"I've only been wondering what will be the end of me."

"What has made you suddenly become so anxious about your end?" Emile looked at her keenly.

The wide eyes raised to his were tragedy incarnate. The long nervous fingers were tightly locked together.

"I'm a coward to-night," the soft hoarse voice went on. "I've never grumbled before, have I, Emile? I seem to have suddenly realised how hopeless everything looks for me in the future. I've had time enough to think it all out since I've

been lying in bed. When I first came here I thought I was going to do all sorts of wonderful things, but now I see that this life leads to nothing, and I may go on being just a circus rider for years. When I get well and finish out this contract I shall have to try and get another engagement in Paris or Vienna. The English Consul and all the other men wait to see me come out, and throw me flowers and rings, but when they see me driving with you in the *Paseo de Gracia*, they look the other way, especially if they are with their wives and families. They like '**ARITHELLI OF THE HIPPODROME**' in her proper place,—the ring. Gas and glare, paint and glitter! That is my life. And they always hope that I shall fall off. I can feel it. It's the Roman arena all over again. For a long time before I had that accident I didn't know how to get through the rehearsals. I nearly fell off two or three times, but there was no one there to see. The more I practised the more cold I got, and I used to have horrible shivering fits. It's so queer. I don't believe I'm made like other people. Estelle gets hot and scarlet when she practises."

"Poor little child!"

"Why are you so nice to me? You've never said anything like that before."

"Because if when you first came here I had be-

gun to pity you it would have made you realise your position sooner than need be. You were like one in a dream. It was not my place to awaken you. I left that for Life, '*la vie*' that you were so anxious to experience. You made yourself '*Chateaux en Espagne*.' We all do that at some time or other."

"Nobody really cares what becomes of me except—" she broke off the sentence and continued steadily. "My people don't mind whether I am here or not. They won't like it if I come back a failure."

In his heart Emile cursed the Fates. Her awakening had been a complete one. At first novelty and excitement had served as ~~merciful anæsthetics~~, but they could not last for ever.

He was not in love with her, he still told himself, but he would miss her. Women like the Roumanoff were the women to whom men made passionate love, but Arithelli was unique. She had become part of his life in Barcelona. Their lives had touched and mingled till it was impossible to believe that he had only known her for a few short months. A future without her would be one without interest. For her he could see no future. She would have to go to the devil some way or another

eventually, and there would be plenty of people ready and willing to provide her with an escort.

He threw away his cigarette, and came across the room to her, and his hands fell heavily upon her shoulders.

“Look here, Fatalité,” he said roughly; “we thought you were dying a little while ago, and I helped to fight for your life, and all the time, at the back of my brain I wished you were dead. Yes, you needn’t look so horrified.” He gave her a fierce shake. “I hoped to see you in your coffin. Can’t you understand, Fatalité? No, of course you can’t, and you think me a brute. One of these days perhaps you will think differently. Probably you imagine I don’t care for you, but if I didn’t should I mind whether you were alive or dead? You’ve always been saying that you feel something is going to happen. It seems you are right. There have been several unexpected developments during the last few days. It is most likely that I may be chosen to go back to Russia with despatches to one of the secret societies there. Here I cannot be arrested, there I can. Of course it means Siberia — eventually. That’s only what we all expect.”

“Then I shall be here alone.”

“Yes, and there’s no future for a woman in this vile place. You know the proverb they have, ‘Can any good thing come out of Barcelona?’ Your looks are against you too.”

“There’s always the river.”

“Then when the time comes choose that — if you still have the courage. You’ve been *bonne camarade* to me, Fatalité. The men you will meet later on may not want that.”

CHAPTER XV.

“I kiss you and the world begins to fade.”

W. B. YEATS.

COUNT VLADIMIR and Emile met and consulted together, the immediate result of the interview being that Vardri was offered the post of private secretary to the former. Emile had gone out leaving them together, and Vladimir had hardly finished speaking when he found himself faced by an unexpected situation.

“I accept with pleasure,” Vardri said, “but on one condition—that it means my remaining in Barcelona.”

Vladimir hesitated. “Well, I had not contemplated that. Naturally one requires one’s secretary to be —”

“I understand, Monsieur. I hope you will not consider me ungrateful, but there is a reason.”

“It’s a woman?”

Vardri bowed gravely. “Exactly, Monsieur. It’s a woman.”

“You are risking a great deal for her. Poleski has told me something of your circumstances, and

it appears that if you do not get some appointment very soon, you will starve."

Vardri straightened himself, throwing back his head with a characteristic gesture. He looked the older man in the eyes, his own alight and eloquent under finely drawn brows.

"That's as it may be! I'll take my chance of work. In any case I cannot leave Barcelona. Of course, I regret greatly that it is impossible for me to fall in with your arrangements."

Vladimir smiled and shrugged. He knew the type with which he had to deal. Quixotic and generous to the verge of folly; the type that will sacrifice itself without reserve for an illusion, an ideal; the type that filled monasteries, and Siberian prisons, and made a jest for half the world. Such men were valuable to the Cause, because they gave ungrudgingly, and never counted cost. The Russian was a man of affairs, cautious, cynical and given to analysis, and he was also a student of human nature. He was moreover interested in the unknown woman.

If he had been told that she was Arithelli the circus-rider, who had sat silently upon the deck of his yacht dressed in gaudy raiment, and indifferent almost to stupidity, then his smile would have been contemptuous instead of tolerant. He was inter-

ested too in the unknown woman's champion. Something in Vardri's attitude of courteous defiance appealed to him by the law that will attract strongly one man's mind to another, diverse in every way. He could see that Vardri was plainly consumptive, and that the disease was in its advanced stages. Even with the aid of good food and an easier life he could not last more than a year or two, so one might as well make things a little more smooth for him during the time.

"I see you have the illusions of youth, my friend," he said carelessly. "I trust they may remain long unbroken. Myself I am sorry to have lived beyond the age when they content one. Sit down and talk to me." He Motioned Vardri towards a chair. "Well, since you have refused to entertain my plan, we must think of something else. I'm at present writing a series of articles on '*Militarism in France*,' and should like to have them translated for publication in an English journal. You speak the language well, better even than Poleski, for you have a better accent. I have been a good deal in London and I notice the difference. I suppose you also write it easily?"

"Yes, I had an English tutor."

"Good! Then you will undertake this work, and you shall fix the price of payment. I'm not in

the least afraid of your asking more than I care to give. You are the type that gets rid of money, not the type that acquires it. Also I will give you an introduction which will enable you to get on the staff of *Le Combat*. They want another man there who is a good linguist, as there is a great deal of correspondence with other countries. As I have an interest in the paper, you may consider it settled. No, don't thank me. Your thanks are due to—a woman. She is unknown to me, but perhaps that is the reason I—I also owe you something, Monsieur Vardri. Your example has made me feel young again."

A week later Vardri went swinging quickly down the Calle San Antonio, on his way to Emile's rooms. He was in exuberant spirits, and whistled as he walked keeping step to the dancing gaiety of '*La petite Tonquinoise*.' His headgear, which vied in picturesque disorder with Emile's historical sombrero, was pushed to the back of his head, exposing his thick, unruly hair, and over one ear, Spanish fashion, he had stuck a carnation.

There was more money in his pocket than he had possessed since his days of luxury in the Austrian château, and for him the sun was shining in a metaphorical as well as a literal sense. During the last few days he had been happier than he could

have believed possible. He felt in better health, for he had been able to go to bed at a reasonable time, and though he missed the horses and the free life of the Hippodrome, and found the work of a newspaper office somewhat trying, there were shorter hours and other advantages.

He had also the joy of knowing that Arithelli was almost well again. She had not been out yet, but Michael Furness had declared her to be practically recovered.

One day Vardri hoped to take her along the sea-front towards the old quarter of the town, where the fishermen and sailors lived, and where she could sit on the stone parapet and look across the harbour, and let the sea-air blow strength and vitality into her.

After all he told himself, life was good even if one were a vagabond. Life with adventure, a little money, and love.

He burst open the door of Emile's sitting-room, and entered headlong. The sun-blinds were all drawn, making everything appear pitch dark after the blinding glare of the streets.

"I want some matches, Poleski! By luck, I've got some cigarettes. One never has both matches and cigarettes at the same time." He had come to a dead stop and stood staring.

"Fatalité! Fatalité! The gods are kind for once! If only I had known you were here sooner."

The half-full box of cigarettes descended to the floor, and its contents went in all directions, and he was kneeling beside her chair and holding both her hands. It was Arithelli not "Fatalité" who smiled back at him. The little mask-like face changed and grew soft till she looked more a girl, less an embodied tragedy. Vardri's wild spirits were infectious, and, as on the night of the Hippodrome fiasco, Youth called and Love made answer.

"*Mon ami*, I am so glad you have come."

"Is this the first time you have been out? Who said you could get up? The doctor?"

"No, it was Emile."

Vardri nodded towards the communicating door of the bedroom. "Poleski is here then?"

"No, and he doesn't know I'm here. He has gone to Sária and will not be back till late. I was horribly irritable this morning, so he thinks I'm all right now." A ripple of amusement broke her voice as their eyes met.

"My sweet, you must ask me to believe some other little *histoire*."

"Oh! but it's true. You should have heard us! I knew that it was funny afterwards, but there was no one to laugh with at the time. It was about

that dreadful old coat of Emile's. He threw it on my bed, and — I can't help being a Jewess, can I? and I so loathe dust and dirt, and I said so. Emile was furious. 'Very well,' he said. 'If you are strong enough to grumble, you are strong enough to get up.' So when he had gone I dressed and came here. I was so glad to get away from that room."

"Not as glad as I am to see you here. And I've heard you laugh, Fatalité. You're a little girl to-day."

"I have moods, dear. I shall depress you sometimes."

Vardri smiled scornfully, and slid down to the floor, his head resting against her knee. "*Je suis bien content!* What cool hands you have, and how still you keep. No other woman in the world was ever so restful. You love to be quiet, don't you? I know you better to-day than I ever did. You were always in the wrong atmosphere at the Hippodrome."

"And I have to go back to it," the girl said under her breath. "And I may be hissed again. You will not be there now, and we shall miss you. I and Don Juan and Cavaliero, and El Rey, and Don Quixote. Some of the grooms are horrible, and the animals get so badly treated."

"It seems to me that everything gets badly

treated here," Vardri muttered. "Women and horses, it's all the same. Don't let us talk about it. It drives me mad to think, I shan't be able to be near you. I was some use to you there."

He jumped up and began to move about the room collecting the scattered cigarettes.

"Shall I play to you, *mon ange*? I suppose the piano hasn't been tuned yet." He struck a few notes, and made a rueful grimace. "It's worse than ever."

"I'm afraid it never will be tuned now that I've been ill and caused so much expense. Emile always says he will go without cigarettes to afford it, and I say I will go without powder, but neither of us keep our heroic resolutions, and the piano gets worse and worse."

Vardri shut down the lid with a bang.

"Well, anyway it doesn't matter," he said, "I don't want to play or do anything; I just want to be with you."

"Bring up a chair, and sit and smoke, *mon camarade*." She held out her hand with a gesture of invitation, and Vardri took it and kissed it, and went back to his former position at her feet.

"Shall I read to you?" he asked. "Ah! I'd forgotten there was something I wanted to tell you. I found a poem the other day, a love-song of

De Musset. Do you know that you lived in this very city years ago, Fatalité, and he saw you and loved you? How else could he have written this?

*“Avez-vous vu en Barcelone,
Une Andalouse au sein bruni,
Pâle comme un beau soir d’Autômne,
C'est ma maitresse, ma lionne,
La Marchesa d’Amagui.”*

Arithelli listened, her eyes dilating, and a little flame of colour creeping up under the magnolia skin that made her likeness to the woman of the poem. Her awakening senses thrilled to the eager voice, the riotous challenging words:

“J’ai fait bien de chansons pour elle.”

He broke off abruptly and continued: “I hate all the rest of it. The woman isn’t like you, further on, and the lover laughs at his own passion, and the whole thing jars. That first verse haunted me for days after I’d read it.”— The sentence was finished by a convulsive fit of coughing, which he vainly tried to stifle.

“This is the first time to-day,” he gasped, between the paroxysms. “I’m quite well really. It’s the cigarette. They often have that effect. Don’t look so worried, or I shall think you hate me for being a nuisance.”

“If you talk so foolishly I shall go.”

She made an attempt to rise, but Vardri caught at her skirts. "You won't go! You don't want to make me worse, do you? Think how sorry you'll be if I cough and worry you all the evening!"

"Can't I get you anything? If only I were not so stupid about illness. Don't try to talk if it makes you worse."

"I won't—if you'll stay."

To Arithelli caresses did not come easily, but during the last few weeks she had learnt many things. She stroked the dark head that rested against her knee, wondering how it was that she had never before noticed till to-day how feverishly brilliant Vardri's eyes were, and how his skin burnt. She had often heard him coughing before, but he had always gone away and left her when an attack came on, with some laughing excuse about the horrible noise he made. After a while he shifted his position, and smiled up at her.

"You're getting tired, Fatalité!"

"No. Tell me, have you anything important to do to-night?"

"No, dear, and if I had I shouldn't do it. Do you feel well enough to come out and have dinner with me somewhere? I'll take you to some place where it's quiet."

"Why not let us stay here all the evening, and have supper together?" Arithelli suggested. "We'll take Emile's things. He loves cooking *cochonneries*, and there is sure to be a *quelque chose* somewhere in the cupboard."

Vardri scrambled to his feet. "Bon! Sit still, and I'll go and *acheter les*—things! We'll leave Emile's *cochonneries* alone. I'm rich now, so we will have luxuries."

"Yes, and I'll hunt for plates and dishes, and wash them properly (not like the Gentiles do) while you go and *acheter les*—things!" Arithelli mocked. "What a dreadful mixture of languages we all use! I used to speak German quite well when I was at the convent, but now I have forgotten nearly all of it. This place is bad for both one's French and English, and Emile says that when I try and speak Spanish it sounds like someone sawing wood."

Vardri went out still coughing, and came back flushed and excitable, laden with various untidy parcels, from which some of the contents were protruding. Long rolls, the materials for a salad, a *pâté*, flowers, and an enormous cluster of grapes. They pledged each other in the yellow wine of the country, and presently Vardri set about the manu-

facture of what he inaccurately described as Turkish coffee. That the result of his efforts was half cold and evil-tasting mattered not to either of them.

Arithelli's red hair was crowned with vine leaves that he had stripped from the grape-cluster and twisted into a Bacchante wreath. She leant her elbow on the table, resting her chin upon her hand. Her eyes glowed jewel-like, almost the same colour as her garland. The flame of love had melted into warmth her statue-like coldness, and given her the one thing she had lacked — expression. Yet the mystery, the charm that surrounded her clung to her even when she appeared most womanly. To the boy lover gazing with devouring eyes she seemed that night more than a woman. He thought of the tales he had heard as a child from the peasants on winter nights in his own country. Tales of the forests and legends of the Hartz Mountains, of lonely places haunted by nixies and wood maidens, fairy shapes with streaming hair and vaporous robes, seeing which a man would become for ever after mad with longing, and desire no mortal woman.

Arithelli's long limbs appeared nymphlike in her plain blue high-waisted gown of Emile's choosing, that had no superfluous bow or trimming, and left free her beauty of outline. She possessed no jewel-

lery now wherewith to deck herself, and there was no trace of artificial red on face and lips.

The candles on the table flickered to and fro in the draught from the open window and she shivered in the midst of some laughing speech and glanced over her shoulder at the door behind her.

Vardri, reading her thoughts, said, "You're afraid of something, dear, what is it?"

"Nothing, at least I thought someone was listening, was coming in. We are always talking of spies till one gets absurdly nervous and imagines all sorts of foolish things. I have never said so to anyone else, but there is always the feeling of being watched. It is so difficult to know who is for and who against us, and so easy to give evidence without meaning to be a traitor. Just before I got ill, Sobrenski sent me to a little newspaper shop down in the Parelo quarter. I was to ask if they sold '*Le Flambeau*.' The man looked at me hard and asked if there was any connection between that journal and the one published at number 27 Calle de Pescadores. The sun must have made me feel stupid, and I answered *Yes*, without thinking. I had taken it for granted that the man was one of us, and then I knew suddenly that he wasn't."

Vardri bent forward across the table. "Did you tell anyone what you had said?"

"Not Sobrenski; I told Emile. He looked me up and down, and said something that I couldn't hear, and then, 'I thought you could hold your tongue, Fatalité. It seems, after all, you are a woman and can't!' and then he walked out of the room. Vardri, did you ever feel as I do when you first began to work for the Cause? Perhaps one gets used to it in the end and doesn't care."

"Yes," the boy answered between his teeth, "Yes! One gets used to it. Dear, your hands are trembling. Do you think anyone can hurt you while I'm here? You are nervous because you've been ill, that's all. This is the first time you've been out and you are overtired. I'll take you back soon. You were all right a few minutes ago. You think of moods!"

She tried to smile, "I warned you, *mon ami*."

"I know. It wasn't any use. That wreath makes you look like the statue of Ariâdne in Rome."

"I wish you would talk to me about yourself."

"Myself!" Vardri shrugged expressively, "*Ma foi!*"

"Tell me what made you join the Cause."

"Because of a man I believed in. You have heard of Guerchouni who died early in the year?

There was a great funeral in Paris. It was in all the papers."

Arithelli nodded, "Yes, I heard the men talking about it at one of the meetings. I wasn't interested enough to listen then. Was he—?"

"He was one of our greatest leaders. His death meant something to me, because it was really through him that I joined the Red Flag. He had a life sentence in Eastern Siberia and he escaped from there and got to America. For some time none of us knew exactly where he was, and then we heard rumours that he was dangerously ill at Geneva. Then came news of his death and his funeral in Paris. His friends had decided to bring the body there, so that all the comrades might be present, for there are many anarchists in Paris. They gave him a guard of honour of Russian students, men and women surrounding the coffin with linked hands, and there were hundreds of red roses and red carnations, though it was in the winter — there had been snow on the ground a few days before. There was a crown of thorns from those who had been his companions in prison, and the canopy of the hearse was a red flag. If only I could have been there to do him homage!"

"There are all sorts of wild stories about his

escape from Siberia. I suppose he bewitched the jailers as he bewitched other men. He was the first man I ever heard speak about the Cause. He came to Vienna and held meetings for the propaganda and collected enormous crowds. I had just begun to take life seriously then, to think about things and to hate injustice.

“ My father drank and wasted money and treated his servants brutally. My mother was dead, and when she was alive she was an invalid, and could do nothing. Most of the people I knew seemed to think the serfs no better than animals. I remember how sometimes when we were starting off in the early morning for a boar hunt in the forest, they would come begging and whining round the horses' heels.

“ They seldom got anything except a kick or a curse. They looked scarcely human, yet it was ourselves who were the brutes really.

“ Well, Guerchouni spoke and I went and listened to him. A friend with whom I had gone to the meetings gave me an introduction to him. I was mad on the Cause long before the interview was over. He was a man that! If he had looked at me twice, I would have walked through flames to please him. Oh, I wasn't the only one! We all felt like that more or less with Guerchouni. I couldn't de-

scribe him. He was not a tall man, but he carried himself well, and he was dark and pale with wonderful blazing eyes. One knew him at once, and talked as if one had known him for years.

“Of course I accepted all his theories and doctrines except two. I don’t believe in ‘*L’Union libre*.’ (They all do, you know, or nearly all) and I never was an atheist.

“A Catholic and an Anarchist! It sounds impossible, doesn’t it, but”—he flushed boyishly—“I believe in *Le bon Dieu*, and the *union libre* is hard on women. Yes, I adored Guerchouni. He worked day and night, he feared nothing, he did impossibilities himself and he made us do impossibilities.”

“He was like Sobrenski.”

“Yes, he was like Sobrenski in some ways. He will be a loss to the Cause.”

For a few moments there was silence, and then Arithelli spoke. “Tell me one more thing. Now we are alone, we can speak the truth to each other, you and I. Vardri, do you still care for the Cause—in the same way you did before?” She whispered the question fearfully, yet knowing well what the answer must be.

“I don’t feel the same about it since I have known you.”

"I have not tried to make you a traitor, have I? Sobrenski always suspects me of that."

"My sweet, you have done nothing. I love you, therefore I must feel differently about the Cause. Why? Because I'm afraid of it for you. Because these men have no consideration for you as a woman, because they always make you take the greatest risks. It is always so in this work. Look what happens to the women in Russia. When there is a political 'Execution' there, nine times out of ten it is a woman who throws the bomb. Look at the things they have done lately. At the printing office we see all the anarchist journals, and the comrades get news privately. The men do little in risking their lives compared to the women, and some of them are so young. An article in '*Les temps Nouveaux*' of last week said that, '*beside the men these young girls are as artistes beside artisans.*' The last case was Sophia Pervesky. She was arrested for being in charge of a secret printing-press. Before the police seized her she nearly found time to put her lighted cigarette down on a pile of explosives. They wounded her in two places, threw her down, and stamped on her injuries. Then they took her to the hospital and kept her there till she had recovered. She waited two

months for death and then they brought her out one morning in the dawn and hanged her.

“‘ You shall see how a Russian woman dies,’ she told them as she ran up the ladder and flung herself into space.

“ You women shame us with your courage. Now every time I hear of a thing like that, I think of you. You may have to run some great risk here for a caprice of Sobrenski’s.”

“ Vardri, Vardri, I wonder what will be the end of it all?”

CHAPTER XVI

THE walls of the Hippodrome were no longer adorned with gaudy posters whereon flared a travestied portrait of "*The beautiful English equestrienne.*" No longer for Arithelli were showered roses, the tribute of head-lines in the weekly journals, and the welcome of many voices. She had been absent for nearly a month, therefore she might as well have been dead as far as the Spanish public was concerned.

The Manager had known this and had been careful to provide his patrons with a new toy, who had come, even as Arithelli herself, from Paris. This was a female ~~contortionist~~ with a serpent's grace, and a serpent's flat head, and wicked slit eyes. She had proved a success, so he could afford to exult, and Estelle dangled in triumph a new pair of diamond earrings. He had lost nothing and the once famous Arithelli, the "*She-wolf*" who had been mad enough to defy him, was now simply one of the crowd. Her name did not appear on the programme. She was not even Madame Mignonne

now, but merely a unit among the many other women who were grouped in the grand spectacle, or a rider in a procession with twenty others. He had reduced her salary to a third of what it had been formerly, and every Saturday she was required to assist with the correspondence and weekly accounts. If she did not like this arrangement, he explained, she could fight out the terms of her contract in the courts. Doubtless she had a great opinion of her own capabilities, but as she could see for herself her place had been easily filled. The world was large, and there were plenty of women — *sacré*, too many!

As usual he was disappointed in the effect of his remarks. Whether her silence meant indifference or sheer stupidity he was never quite sure. As Ari-thelli had no vanity the loss of her position meant little to her.

The loss of a private dressing-room meant a great deal. It was a refined torture to her to be herded among the other women, with their noise and quarrelling and coarse jokes. She found changes too. Her friend the toothless lion had succumbed to old age, several of the helpers had been changed, and Vardri was no longer near at hand to lift her on to her horse and wait to help her dismount. Whenever he could get away from Vladimir and the

newspaper office, he was among the spectators, and their thoughts and glances met across the wide arena's space. Emile did not come regularly now though he took care there was always someone sent to bring her home.

Since the night of the alarms in the Calle de Pescadores, the Brotherhood had decided in council that they must change their place of meeting, at any rate for a time, and that no part of the city itself could be considered safe for the purposes of a meeting place.

They must keep to the hut up in the mountains. This had been seldom used on account of the difficulty in getting there, and the waste of time involved by the distance. In all respects it was safer. If they were surprised it was not likely they would all be caught, for in the open there was always a chance of escape. The distance and lonely situation were all in their favour. In a small house in a narrow street they were like trapped animals.

The custom was to start at midnight on the outskirts of the town, collecting by degrees, and when they were well on their way the cavalcade joined together and formed into Indian file.

Some were on horseback and some on the more sure-footed mules.

Not one among the conspirators could ride with

the exception of Vardri and Enile, and the knowledge of the art possessed by the latter was poor enough.

The steeds of the general company went at whatever pace they chose and in what direction they saw fit, and occasionally two or three got wedged together in some narrow place and there was an interlude of kicking and squealing.

Then "Fatalité" was called to the rescue as being the only one among them capable of managing horseflesh.

When not required in her office of peacemaker she was sent on in front as guide to the procession, dressed in her boy's disguise and astride the most vicious of the mules. These excursions meant less rest for her than ever for the party seldom returned till five o'clock in the morning.

Emile had told her that she must get her sleep up in the hut.

"You have two hours to yourself," he said. "You can't sleep up there? Nonsense! Make up your mind to do it and then you will."

The building in question, which was more like an outhouse than anything else, she had christened, "The Black Hole of Calcutta." The upper part, which was approached by a ladder as a loft would be, was used as a meeting-room, while the ground

floor became a temporary stable for the horses and mules, of which she was left in charge. Since the scene in that upper room in the Calle de Pescadores she had put herself outside all consideration; and Sobrenski now excluded her from all work other than the merest drudgery. Vardri was also kept under surveillance. It was felt by all that in some quarter treachery lurked as yet undiscovered, and every man suspected his comrades. There were indications that someone, hitherto a sworn ally of the Cause, had turned spy and sold certain information to the authorities.

Even Sobrenski's iron nerves were stretched to breaking point.

The rest tried to drown anxiety in *absinthe*, and all grew daily more morose and uncertain of temper.

The first sensation came in the shape of a rumour that Count Vladimir's companion, Pauline Souvaroff, had disappeared.

Only three people knew that she had vanished utterly and completely on the same day that she had received a communication from the leader. The note had been brought to her by Vladimir himself. He could guess at its contents, but Pauline had revealed nothing.

Two hours afterwards when he went on shore she was shut up in her cabin, and he had not inter-

rupted her, thinking she was asleep. When he returned, and found her door unlocked, and her cabin empty, a suspicion of the truth occurred to him.

Everything was left in perfect order, but there was no letter, no word of explanation. He questioned the crew, and heard that she had been rowed to shore by two of them soon after he left. She had given the men orders not to wait, but to return at once to the yacht. For a week Vladimir hunted through street and slum. At the end of that time he knew that alive or dead he would never see Pauline Souvaroff again. The missive he had brought her from Sobrenski had probably meant a journey for her to one of the great centres of the movement—Amsterdam, Geneva, or perhaps even London.

Alphonse of Spain was now in England, having escaped two attempts upon his life in Paris, and in his own capital. His every moment would be watched and noted by the destroyers of monarchy. Probably she had been chosen to obtain information, because women made better spies than men, and their movements were not so likely to be noticed by the police. Many a high official whose name was on the list of those condemned to death by a revolutionary tribunal had been tracked from city to city by female agents.

Yet, if she had been sent on such an errand, what reason could she have had for going in secret, alone and without a word of farewell? He had supposed it impossible that she could have kept anything from him; of course there must eventually be separation. He had warned her of that. And when it came he had expected scenes, tears and a frantic appeal.

That she should vanish in silence was inconceivable. Perhaps she had not cared for him so much after all. In any case the episode had been a charming one, and to him no woman could ever have been more than an episode. He had shown her some of the many beautiful things and places of the world, and by her own words he had made her happy. Now their play time was over. He had his work and she hers. She had come into his life as a piece of driftwood floats to shore on the edge of a wave, and gone out of it as noiselessly.

Vladimir did not discuss his private affairs, so that among all the conspirators Emile alone knew, and it was Emile alone who guessed the truth.

CHAPTER XVII

“Tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse.”

FOR some days Arithelli had not seen Emile, and she had wondered. Since the night she had sat with Vardri in his room, he had scarcely spoken to her except for a few moments on business matters.

She thought he looked haggard and worried, and there was a change that she could not define in his manner towards her. She wondered if he knew about Vardri, if he thought she was deceiving him.

She wanted to tell of this new, wonderful thing that had befallen her, but he had given her no chance, and she had begun to think that he did not even take sufficient interest in her to care what she thought or felt as long as she performed her allotted tasks and did not worry him with complaints or questions.

The feeling of a barrier between them troubled her vaguely, and she was glad when she found him one night waiting for her outside the stage door.

Half an hour later he was smoking a cigarette in her room while she brushed her hair.

They had been silent for some time, and both started when the door was assaulted by a sudden thump, and the scarecrow-like visage of the depressed landlady appeared in the opening.

Having delivered herself of a small cardboard box, and a few grumbling comments upon the indecent hours and ways of circus performers, she withdrew, and Arithelli proceeded to cut the string and remove the lid.

"I can't see what it is in this light," she said; "Emile, may I have the candle a little nearer? Flowers? No one sends me flowers now. But these are —"

Her voice broke and stopped. Emile, who had been on the alert from the moment of the landlady's entrance, sprang up and pulled the girl to one side. A mysterious parcel at that hour of the night, too late for any post. One might have guessed what it meant.

"What is it?" he asked sharply. The answer was an incoherent one, and he could see that she was paralysed with terror.

The opening of the box had revealed a sinister-looking bouquet of artificial black roses tied with blood-red ribbons.

In Barcelona there are many strange and ingenious ways of conveying death by explosives.

A clock, a painted casket which might contain bonbons; a coffee-pot, a *casserole*—any apparently harmless and common utensil.

A bunch of flowers was one of the most common mediums for a bomb.

The Anarchist colours showed clearly that it must either have been sent by an enemy who had been formerly one of the band, and who was now revenging himself by an attempt to see his former associates “hoist with their own petard,” or else it was an affair of the police. In any case, supposing the thing to be harmless, it was a warning of danger.

Emile's wits worked swiftly, and he was used to emergencies. He looked round, and found a jug of water, and the floral tribute floated harmlessly therein. As it did not sink at once he concluded that there was no concealed bomb. Then he turned his attention to Arithelli, and gave her a vigorous shaking, which was probably, under the circumstances, the best possible restorative.

“ You'll die more than once in imagination before your time comes, Fatalité. Probably the next parcel you receive will not need as much investigation.”

She tried to smile. “ I'm sorry! They looked so uncanny, and when I saw red I thought — Emile, what does it all mean?”

"It means danger, my dear. It means that you are suspected. You yourself best know whether the suspicion is deserved or not. Of course it may be only one of the police tricks, but I don't think so. Anyway whether it was charged or not it's safe enough now. Look in the box and on the floor to see if there's any note or message. There isn't? *Eh bien!* I suppose they thought this would speak with sufficient eloquence."

He fished the bedraggled bouquet out of the water and hung it like a trophy across Arithelli's mirror, which was a fetish of its owner and the one valuable thing she now possessed. It had been the gift of Michael Furness, who had bought it from the Jewish herbalist. It was of antique silver gilt in oval shape, and rimmed with rough topaz set in silver, and was alleged by its former owner to have been the property of Agnès Sorél. Arithelli had often declared that in it she could see visions as in a crystal.

Over it Emile carefully arranged the flowers so that the stained red ribbons hung limply across the polished surface. Then he sat down again and lighted another cigarette.

"You ought not to be afraid of this sort of thing, you know," he said. "Sudden death is part of our business. In the oath we take we swear to

‘Slay or be slain,’ if by so doing we can advance the Cause one small step forward.”

She caught at her breast with a sudden gesture of passion. Death—could they talk and think of nothing else? And she was a woman now, not a weapon, and she wanted life.

“You don’t seem very enthusiastic,” the cold voice continued. “A few months ago the dangerous side of the game was rather an attraction to you than otherwise. Now you shrink and shiver at everything. You do your work, yes, because, you can’t help doing that, but is there any heart in what you do?”

“None! Every day I live, I loathe it more!”

“Take care!”

“I’m past caring. When I came out here first I was a child playing at a new game.”

Emile’s back was turned to her, and if his answering speech was brutal, it was because his conscience was awake and crying fiercely. He would not be likely to make the mistake of interfering with people’s lives a second time. He had seen in her an instrument to be handled at will, and had charged himself with the burden of her destiny, and now he supposed she was about to reproach him.

“You are hysterical. That’s the worst of women. They always are—more or less. You

had better go to bed, and not talk nonsense. If you were a child only a few months ago you are not too old to be treated as one now."

It hurt him more than it hurt her, but she would never know that. His pulses hammered furiously as she dropped at his side with a soft rustle of garments. Her clasped hands rested on his knee; the strong, slender hands that had grown rough with work.

"Emile," she whispered, "can't you see that I've altered? I'm a woman now. You said I should be one soon. I've wanted to tell you all along, but I always hoped you had guessed."

"Perhaps I did, but I preferred that you should tell me yourself. And since when have you become what you call 'a woman'? No, you needn't answer. When I knew that you and Vardri had been together in my rooms, I was certain I had not warned you without reason."

"You knew before I did myself."

"*Mon enfant*, I'm neither blind nor a fool. As they say in this country, 'love and a cough cannot be hidden.' I was sure about Vardri, but about you;—no, one couldn't say. When you came out here you were a sexless creature with a brain. It did not seem likely that you would develop into the ordinary girl with a lover."

It was the only way he could keep a hold upon himself, by keeping up a pose of cynicism. The fragrance of her hair, the curved mouth so close to his own, maddened him. He who could have been her lover had been only her guardian, her task-master. And now she was ready to give herself to a boy, who thought life was a romance, and who would probably sit at her feet reading poetry while they both starved.

“ You have been together often? ”

Her head drooped. “ Yes. I should have told you before.”

“ What plans have you made? I suppose it will be the usual mad scheme of running away. I ought to betray you, of course, but — ”

“ We haven’t arranged anything yet; there is plenty of time.”

“ Plenty of time — Mon Dieu! ” the man rasped out. “ How like you, Fatalité! What a pair! Vardri always living *au clair de la lune*, and you half asleep, and full of illusions. *Les illusions sont les hirondelles*. How often have I told you that? ”

“ They make life possible,” Arithelli answered softly.

Again the man stared and marvelled. Verily, here was another being who was neither “ Becky Sharp ” nor “ Fatalité.” The exultation, the tri-

umph of one loved and desired, was hers for the moment. Who, seeing her now, could have the heart to warn her of inevitable disillusion, the doubts and fears, the clinging and the torments that are the heritage of all womenkind.

He, too, had once dreamed foolish dreams.

He gripped her by the shoulder and forced her to look at him.

“Vardri is your lover? You shall answer me before I leave this room.”

She did not flinch, or blush, or look away.

“I love him.”

Joy shone in her widely open eyes. Love hovered about her mouth, and the passion that had stirred in him momentarily shrank back ashamed. He pushed back her hair with a rough caress.

“It’s all right, *ma chère*. You needn’t be afraid. I shall not be here to advise you soon, and all I have to say now is, never imagine yourself secure for an instant. Sobrenski is bound to discover this in the course of time, and he has seen this sort of thing before, which will not make him any more ~~merciful~~. He has watched human nature long enough to know that where there is what you would call love, people want to create, they no longer want to destroy. If, as you say, you have made no plans, then make them. And now you’d better go to bed, unless you

want to look more like a ghost than usual to-morrow."

As he went out into the moonlit street Emile knew that he had taken the first step on his *Via Crucis*. He did not call it that, for of religion in the orthodox sense he possessed nothing, but he knew that his feet were set upon the path where snow and blood would mingle in his footprints. He was going back to Russia, where death would be a thing to be welcomed and desired. He had listened to the tales of escaped prisoners, and he knew that no words could exaggerate this frozen Hell in which flourished vices unnamable, where men rotted alive, and women strangled themselves with their own hair, or cut their throats with a scrap of glass to escape the brutalities of a gaoler or Cossack guard.

He wondered whether it would be Akatui, or the mines, for him. It was no use to try and delude himself that he could escape the police.

He had got out of Russia by the skin of his teeth last time, and, even if he managed to get his despatches safely delivered, there would be a raid on the newspaper office, an arrest in the street. Of course there was always the hope that he might come in for a chance shot in a scrimmage, but that was too much luck to expect.

He had nothing to wait for now after what he

had heard to-night, and the sooner he put himself out of the way, the better. He would volunteer at once for the St. Petersburg mission. The usual custom was to cast lots, unless some enthusiast begged for the privilege of a speedy doom. By virtue of his long service he had a right to claim that privilege.

If he could go to-morrow so much the better. After what Arithelli had confessed it would be dangerous for them both if he stayed. For a moment the primæval man in him leapt up, telling him that he had only to pit himself against Vardri, and the victory would be assuredly his own. His rival was only a boy, and Emile knew that if there came the struggle between male and male, the odds were all in his own favour. Arithelli had grown into the habit of obedience to him, and if he wished it he could make it practically impossible for her to see Vardri without his knowledge and consent. She would sorrow for her lover at first, but he was a man, and he could make her forget.

A thousand little devils crowded close, whispering how easy it would be to get Vardri sent out of the way. A few words to Sobrenski, and the whole thing would be done.

His sense of justice reminded him that he least of all people had a right to grudge her a few hours

of happiness. If he obliterated himself he was only making her a deserved reparation for some of the things she had suffered. Through him she had joined the Anarchist ranks, and through him she had taken vows that despoiled her of the hopes and joys of womanhood, and transformed her into an instrument of vengeance. She had apparently never realised that she had been in any way injured, for she had never blamed him, and been invariably grateful for anything he had done for her physical comfort.

She loved Vardri, or imagined that she did. Emile told himself savagely that he was a fool who deserved no pity, for he had had his own chance and missed it. He had been with her by night and day, and her life had been in his own hands all these months, but he had never made love to her. He had only bullied her, taught her, made her work, looked after her clothes and food, and, he knew it now too late, loved her.

She had never suspected it, and the secret should remain his own. Love and love-making were two very different things. She did not know that now, but later on she would, when she was ten years older, perhaps, and then it would not matter to him, for he would be under two or three feet of snow in a Siberian convict settlement.

He had gone about persuading himself that she was still a child, and this Austrian boy, this wastrel and dreamer, had awakened her.

It was no use wasting time in sentiment and regrets. *À la Guerre, comme à la Guerre.* The episode was finished.

He would have work enough to divert his mind soon. There was nothing left to him now but the Cause.

He would see Sobrenski to-morrow, and hurry on all arrangements for departure.

After all, as he had once told Arithelli, in any venture it is only the first step that counts.

CHAPTER XVIII

“Would I lose you now? Would I take you then?
If I lose you now that my heart has need,
And come what may after death to men,
What thing worth this will the dead years breed?”

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME.

THREE days later the early morning post brought Arithelli a letter.

She sat up in bed eagerly to receive it, and with the heaviness of sleep still upon her eyes. As she read, the lace at her throat trembled with her quickened breathing, and her heart called back an answer to the tender, reckless phrases.

Vardri was idealist as well as lover, and graceful turns of expression came to his pen readily and without effort. In many pages of characteristic, hurried, irregular writing he set forth wild and unpractical schemes for their future.

He urged her to take the dangerous step of leaving Barcelona and cutting herself free of the bonds of her allegiance to the Cause.

If there was risk in going, he wrote, there was infinitely more risk in remaining.

If he abandoned his political views it was more than likely that his father would receive him. Their quarrel and parting four years ago had been solely on those grounds, and he was the only son, and there were large estates to be inherited.

If it were the price of gaining her he was prepared to renounce all his theories, socialist and revolutionist.

He had been able to save a little money lately, enough for their journey to Austria. He was sure of a welcome among the officials and work-people of his former home. The wife of the steward had been his mother's maid, and she and her husband would give him shelter till he could see his father and make terms.

If things turned out well then his life and Arithelli's would be one long fairy-tale, which should begin where all other fairy-tales ended. If his father refused to see him then surely they could both find some engagement in another circus or Hippodrome.

She had the advantage of the reputation she had gained here, and he could work in the stables again, and they would be free and together.

Arithelli kissed the letter, before she put it down, and lay back with her hands over her eyes, trying to think. She had begun her adventures by run-

ning away from home, and now for the second time her only course was flight. Even Emile had told her not to waste time in going. For her it seemed there was never to be any peace or rest.

If they could only find some haven away from all the world, she thought. A forest or desert, some unknown spot where there was air and space and natural savage beauty, a tent to dwell in, a horse to ride, complete freedom, the life of her remote ancestors, simple, dignified.

Once she had craved for change. Now she feared it. She knew what Vardri had ignored, that the moment they both left Barcelona they would become fugitives. If they were discovered they would be treated simply as deserters from the ranks of an army.

Instinctively her thoughts turned to Emile. It was he who must help her to decide. She slid out of bed, and commenced her toilet, while she recalled to mind the things that must be got through during the day. There was a manuscript to be delivered to Sobrenski, an article of Jean Grave's from *Les Temps Nouveaux* which she had copied for reproduction.

She finished dressing her hair, and pushed the window more widely open, for the sound of music in the distance had caught her ear.

Though it was now autumn, and in England there would have been mist and gloom and fogs, here the sun shone, and the air was sweet and mild.

The parching, exhausting heat of the summer was gone, and everything smelt fresh and clean, without any touch of winter cold.

Down below in the Calle Catriona the music swelled louder and higher till her attic room was filled with the dancing notes.

Along the pavement two men walked slowly with guitar and flageolet.

They walked turning in opposite directions, their heads thrown back, their feet keeping step, two black-haired, supple vagabonds of gypsy breed, who had come down to the city from their mountain home on the heights of Montserrat.

The guitar twanged merrily, the reed-like notes of the flute were true and clear as the song of a thrush. The melody turned and climbed and twisted, rose to a climax, and re-commenced again the same phrase. Arithelli listened, hypnotised and bewitched, as she always was by music.

Something wild and primitive in her responded to the shrill, sweet, insistent call. She had felt like that before, listening to the Tziganes on the Rambla, and it was as if the heart were being dragged out

of her body. She thought of the childish story of the Piper of Hamelin. She could understand now what had made the children follow him with dancing footsteps, through street to street, on, on from dawn till dusk.

The guitar-player glanced up in passing and mocked her with laughing eyes. An orange-coloured scarf left his brown throat exposed, and there were gold rings in his ears. She kissed her hand and called down greetings in Spanish, and stood at the window, watching and listening and longing to run out into the street and follow as the children followed through the town of Hamelin.

All the joy of life was in those oft-repeated and alluring phrases, the fall of water, the hum of bees, the shiver of aspen leaves, the slow music of a breaking wave.

She strained to hear the last faint echoes till all sound was hidden by a turn of the road, and the brief enchantment was at an end, leaving her to the realities of life.

She dressed slowly, singing under her breath as she plaited her hair before Agnès Sorél's mirror. Before she left the room she thrust the loose sheets of Vardri's letter between the folds of her blouse, leaving the envelope lying among the bed clothes.

Late in the afternoon one of the "comrades" brought her a cipher message, warning her of a meeting arranged to take place in the "Black Hole" up in the hills.

Half an hour after she left the Hippodrome she was in boy's clothes and riding out to the *rendezvous* to wait till the others appeared. She had hoped for the chance of a talk with Emile, but to her surprise he was not among those who mustered outside the town. She had never known him to be absent from a meeting before, but it was not her business to ask questions.

While the rest of the company occupied themselves with long and bloodthirsty orations, and hatched fresh schemes for the destruction of their fellow-creatures, and the regeneration of the whole earth, she went quietly about her duties as stable boy.

When she had finished she set the lantern at the furthest end of the stable, and pulling off her hat and black curly wig stretched herself wearily at full length on a truss of hay in a dark corner among the tethered horses. The ways of men she had begun to fear and hate, but of the beasts she had no fear, for they were always grateful to those who cared for them, and they also had suffered at the hands of their masters.

A lethargy had taken possession of her whole body, and her limbs felt heavily weighted. She closed her eyes and sank inertly into the bed of soft and fragrant hay.

Her loose shirt of faded dusky red had fallen open at the throat, and showed the dead-white skin. Her feet, in riding boots of brown leather, were crossed beneath the dark drapery of her cloak. A leather strap served as a belt for the slender hips that were more like those of a boy than a woman. The horses fidgeted and stamped, and a mule dragged at its halter with laid-back ears and vicious sidelong glances. Sometimes a stirrup or a bit clashed against another with a musical ring and jingle.

Arithelli heard nothing till she awoke to find herself in Vardri's arms, and being lifted into a sitting position with her back against the wall.

In answer to her sleepy murmur of surprise, a hand was laid over her mouth with a whispered —
“*Gare à toi petite! ne fais pas de bruit.*”

She sat up fully awake, and swept the veil of hair out of her eyes.

“Oh! it's you, *mon ami!* Is it time to go? I must get up and see to the horses.”

But he held her kneeling by her side.

“No, no! Lie still, dear. There's time enough.

Yes, Sobrenski is still talking. Can't you hear him? You had my letter safely?"

She laid her hand on her breast.

"It's here."

"Thank you! How long is it since I've seen you? It seems like a century. Those brutes up there were driving me mad with their cold-blooded arrangements for wholesale murder. The latest idea is to explode a bomb outside one of the big *cafés* when Alfonso comes here next week to inspect the troops. They might as well leave him alone. What harm has he done them? As long as they can see people flying into atoms with the help of a little nitroglycerine they are quite happy. Vengeance, vengeance! That is their eternal cry. Of course in Russia it's a different thing. One must either be an autocrat and slave-driver or a Nihilist out there, but here — they are mad, all of them! They have just settled to draw lots to-morrow night. I wonder who will have the 'honour' of becoming executioner? I suppose they can't do it to-night because Poleski isn't here."

Arithelli shook her head.

"That is not the reason. They have given Emile other work to do in Russia. He is leaving here very soon. I thought you knew."

"Who told you that Poleski is going away? It may not be true."

"Emile himself. Oh! it's true enough. I don't know when he will go. He doesn't know himself, but soon."

"Will you trust me to take care of you when Poleski is gone?"

"I'll trust you always."

"Promise me you'll come away with me. If you care you'll come. I'll give up the Cause for your sake. I've told you so in my letter and now I say it again."

"So I've made you a traitor. Sobrenski was right."

"My sweet, how can I live with violence and death and misery since I have known you? I want to get away from men and back to Nature to be healed. It doesn't follow that because I have grown to hate some of the revolutionist methods that I am against all their theories. I believe they are right in sharing things, in fighting for those who are trodden down by the rich, but you and I can still believe all that without becoming inhuman. Think of Sobrenski. He's a werewolf, not a man! Promise me that you'll come soon. Let me take you away before they make you one of their 'an-

gels of vengeance,' as they call these women of the revolution."

Excitement and the feverish devil of consumption had turned his blood to fire. He would take no denial, pay no heed to Arithelli's entreaties for time to think, and to consult Emile.

For once he forgot to be gentle, and dragged her head back roughly, whispering passionate words, his face pressed against her own. For a moment he saw no longer the goddess on her ivory throne, but a woman of flesh and blood, warm, living, and fragrant and to be desired after a man's fashion.

Arithelli closed her eyes and leant back, yielding herself to his caresses. The pressure of his hand across her throat hurt her, but in some strange way it also gave her pleasure. Love, the schoolmaster, again stood by her side teaching her the lesson learnt sooner or later by all women, that pain at the hands of one beloved is a thing close akin to joy. She felt incapable of any struggle or resistance, bodily or mental. She had given her heart therefore her body was also his to use as he willed, and feeling her thus abandoned to him all the boy's chivalry was stirred anew, and the hunger for possession was lost in the desire to serve and protect.

Possibly if he had been forty instead of twenty-eight, he would perhaps have demanded a man's rights. Being, however, according to the world's standard, a fool and a dreamer, he chose to let the moment pass, to refuse what the gods offered, to think of Arithelli rather than of himself.

"I'm hurting you, dear." His voice shook a little, in spite of his efforts to control it.

"No. Nothing hurts now. And I'm glad you love me."

"I hurt you a minute ago. I was mad and a beast. Will you forgive me? You are not frightened?"

"No. I was only thinking of the future of to-morrow."

"Let us forget to-morrow," the boy pleaded. "Can you not forget for once?"

"We have to-day, and each other. '*Aujourd'hui le Printemps, Ninon.*' It's summer for us now, Fatalité! When one loves there is always summer."

He drew her out into the starlight as he heard the noise of the men pushing back their seats and moving about overhead.

Several voices were raised in angry altercation.

He raged inwardly as he thought how in a few minutes he would have to see her at the orders of

them all, sent here and there, at everyone's call, and forced to work without either thanks or reward.

"Let me go in, dear," Arithelli said. "They will expect to find things ready."

But Vardri held her back.

"Let them expect! Give them the trouble of looking for you. They keep you up all night, so they can afford to waste a few minutes extra."

It was both a foolish and useless protest and Arithelli knew that she would pay afterwards for these snatched moments, but she did not grudge the price, for to her they seemed worth the payment required.

She was glad of the air too.

She turned a little in Vardri's arms, lifting her face to the soft night wind. The coolness and the dark were like the touch of a soothing hand.

The branches of the tree under which they stood rustled softly, and the undergrowth stirred with the startled movements of some awakened bird or small animal.

A bat flew past, almost brushing them with its velvet wings. From the marsh lands below the dangerous white mist hovered like a fairy veil.

"I love the night," Arithelli whispered. "It makes me want to do all sorts of things. Do you remember the story of Marguerite of France, who

heard the gypsies singing under her window and leant out and called to them to take her away. I feel like that. Do you understand?"

Vardri drew her closer. "I know, my heart. Tell me more."

"There were some gypsies singing under my window this morning," Arithelli went on. "I wished I could have gone out and followed them 'over the hills and far away' like the children in the old rhymes. 'The Irish and Jewish people have always been wanderers. Perhaps that is why I am fated never to stay long in one place."

He answered her in the same mood.

"We'll start at once, shall we, Fatalité? We'll saddle two of the horses and ride, ride day and night till we come to Montserrat, and there we shall find your gypsies and their tribe. When you come to my country there'll be gypsies too, and they shall play and sing for you, and you'll know what music is for the first time."

"How foolish we are!" Her eyes were wet, but she was smiling. "If Emile heard me talking like this he would be so angry."

"He talked like this once," Vardri replied. "Poleski was young too not so very long ago, and he loved someone."

"Yes, I know." She found it almost impossible

to think of Emile as a lover in spite of the photograph she had found, and the words in his own writing upon his songs. She knew them by heart. "*Emile à Marie. Sans toi la mort.*" And on another, "*Etoile de mon âme! Je vous adore de tout mon cœur, ton Emile.*"

Perhaps it was the memory of this passion of his youth that had made him kind to her.

While they talked and lingered, Sobrenski was descending the rickety ladder that served as a staircase.

He had noticed Vardri's exit from the room, as he noticed everything else. All the other men had been too excited to care whether one more or less was there or not. In the hot argument that raged in the upper room, the absence of one of the members of the Brotherhood was apparently forgotten.

Their leader, however, did not lose his head or his powers of observation even when matters of life or death were in the balance. Whatever he did was always done deliberately and in cold blood.

All the time he had been apparently presiding over the discussion he had also been thinking rapidly.

It would be to his ultimate advantage not to interfere with Arithelli and Vardri just now, but to let them be together, to see as much of each other

as possible. It was as well that Vardri should become thoroughly infatuated, as then he would be certain to take some step that would bring things to a crisis. They would be sure to try to escape out of the country and hide themselves somewhere. They would not be the first people who had tried that sort of thing before.

In the course of his life he had known others who had flung the Cause and their vows to the winds from fear or passion and tried to hide themselves under some disguise.

If they happened to be clever and have plenty of money their escape had been fairly easy, and they had even been safe for perhaps a year or so. Then just as they had begun to feel secure and had grown careless, the vengeance of their own particular circle had overtaken them. There had been accounts in the newspapers of a mysterious tragedy to which no motive could be assigned, and for which no one could be brought to justice, and that was all.

They were all monotonously alike, these affairs!

Sobrenski had said little to anyone else of his suspicions.

No need to declare anyone a traitor till it was proven. Such things had a demoralising effect, and treachery was an infectious disease.

He descended the uneven rungs of the ladder, treading soft-footed as a cat.

There was no noise of talking, so of course she was asleep. *Sacré*, these lazy women! So she could not keep awake even for a lover!

The place was dark except for the glimmering light at the far end, and he was obliged to feel his way to avoid the mules, who had an evil trick of lashing out with their heels at anything in the vicinity.

At the foot of the steps he trod on a riding whip, which he recognised as one belonging to Vardri.

In the dim circle of light cast by the smoky lamp there was only a truss of hay disordered as if someone had lain upon it, and the *manta* and other things belonging to Arithelli.

There was one thing more, a sheet of paper covered closely with an untidy scrawl.

The lynx eyes flashed, and Sobrenski bent eagerly forward.

Bad as the light was it had not taken him long to recognise the writing.

He held it close to the lamp, and smiled with satisfaction.

Nothing could be better from his point of view. In the first sentence there was all, even more, than he wanted.

He smoothed it out between his pointed fingers, folded it, and bestowed it carefully in an inside pocket.

It was just the kind of thing he would have expected from a girl of Arithelli's type,— to go about dropping letters. She had not method enough even to put on her clothes decently; they always looked as if they were falling off, and her hair as if it was coming down.

Sapristi! A fine agent for the Cause! and one fit to be trusted with important documents.

Poleski must have been quite mad when he suggested introducing her to the Brotherhood, and he himself deserved even more blame for having as much as listened to the suggestion.

A girl of that age, picked up from nowhere, and like the rest of her sex a mass of lies and vanity.

He held the lantern above his head, and peered round. Surely they had not been so utterly insane as to have attempted to escape to-night? All the horses and mules were there safe enough, and obviously they would not attempt to walk.

He strode towards the door, meeting them on the threshold, and in spite of himself could not help being impressed by the uncanny likeness between the two, in form and outline.

They had even the same trick of movement.

The thought of what he had found made him feel almost good-humoured, although he took good care that no one else should benefit by this unusual mood.

"You have found yourself a little distraction, *hein?*" he said, ignoring Arithelli's presence. "We are not up here for amusement all the same. There's nothing done. I supposed you had come down to see to the horses."

Vardri strolled across to a rack, and took down an armful of saddles and stirrups.

"I have," he answered laconically. "They'll be ready in five minutes."

Sobrenski turned to the girl, and spoke to her in an undertone. "What are you wasting time for? See to your work." Vardri raised his head from the adjustment of a girth.

"I'm doing Mademoiselle Arithelli's work. There is no need for her to trouble." His accents possessed both dignity and command. For an instant their positions were reversed. The leader smothered an oath; but said no more. He reflected that he could well afford to wait for his revenge. The game was absolutely in his own hands if only they had known it.

He could see that they were both perfectly unconscious of the fact that they had lost anything.

When they discovered they would most likely conclude it had happened during the ride up.

When Arithelli had dragged herself up into her bedroom the sky was lighting with the dawn. They had mistaken the road and gone a mile or two out of the way, and one of the men had been thrown off and twisted his ankle, and made another halt and delay. She drew the curtains closely and lay down without undressing.

Before she slept she put her hand into her breast, and felt the rustle of the thin paper on which Vardri's letter had been written.

It was not until the landlady had nearly battered down her door that she stirred four hours later, and then she unfastened her blouse and drew out instead of the original two sheets, only one.

She did not feel particularly alarmed; supposing it had been put with the envelope that she had left about in the morning. Her things so often got lost, and it was Emile who generally found them.

CHAPTER XIX

“Must a man have hope to fight?
Can a man not fight in despair?”

“A Polish Insurgent,” JAMES THOMPSON.

How he lived through his last day in Barcelona Emile never quite knew. A strong will, strong tobacco, and plenty of work were all aids in helping him to preserve his sanity.

He soon arranged things with Sobrenski, and found no difficulty in obtaining the post of messenger in the St. Petersburg affair.

He walked to the Hippodrome while the *matinée* performance was in progress, and left a message for Arithelli at the stage door.

Then he went back to his rooms in the Calle San Antonio, and began to make the few necessary preparations for departure. He was not encumbered with worldly goods, and his wardrobe was not extensive, so there remained only to look through and destroy all documents, books, or letters that could not be carried about or that might involve the safety of others.

Certain songs and pieces of music he put together in a pile, the rest he tore across and threw into a corner. He would have no need of these amusements now. Cultivation of the fine arts is not encouraged in the political prisons.

At five o'clock Arithelli entered the room, her clothes put on carelessly, the grey pallor of intense weariness upon her face. She had been working early and late during the past two days, and the thought of the missing letter worried her from time to time. Sometimes she felt almost certain that she had dropped it in changing from her circus clothes, and that it had been appropriated out of curiosity by one of the women who shared the dressing-room. As it was written in English, they would probably throw it away at once in disgust, annoyed at being deprived of the excitement of a romance or scandal.

She knew it would be useless to make enquiries. If it had been left there it had been done late at night, and the dressing-rooms were always cleaned early next morning, and it would have been swept away with the other rubbish.

She had not said anything about her loss to Vardri. It would make him even more anxious than herself, and she must bear the penalty of her own carelessness.

She hoped that after all it would come to light in some box or drawer among her clothes.

She came forward noiselessly across the polished, carpetless floor.

“Bon jour, Emile! You wanted me?”

He pointed to a chair.

“Sit down! Your hat is on crooked — as usual! Are you so little of a woman that you never use a mirror?”

A gleam of fun lit up her eyes.

“You covered mine up the other night with that horrible wreath and streamers. I can only see myself in little bits now.”

“Well, sit down and I’ll talk to you presently.”

Emile returned to the sorting and destruction of his correspondence, and Arithelli lay back in her chair with a sigh of content, and closed her eyes. When she opened them again he was standing beside her with a glass of red wine in his hand.

“Drink this,” he said, giving it to her.

“It isn’t *absinthe*, is it?” she asked. “I can’t see in this light, and I don’t want —”

“It doesn’t matter what it is or what you want. Don’t argue, but finish it. How fond you women are of talking!” He waited till she had obeyed him.

“You see that music? Well, you can take it back with you. I shall not have any more use for

music when I leave here. And listen to me now, and don't go to sleep for the next five minutes if you can help it."

He kept full control of himself and his feelings. If anything his voice was a little more rasping than usual, and his dry words of counsel and advice were spoken in his ordinary hard, practical manner. An outsider would have found it difficult to say which was the more indifferent in appearance of these two who had been so strangely intimate for half a year, and who were now about to part.

The girl was apathetic from physical fatigue and past emotions.

She thought as she looked round the familiar room how impossible it was to believe that she would never be there again after to-day, and that Emile would never again come to her.

The wine cleared her brain and made her blood run more quickly. She roused herself to listen to what Emile was saying, and to answer the questions he was asking her about her own arrangements. She thought he seemed relieved when she told him of Vardri's scheme, and she restrained a strong desire to tell him also about the missing letter.

He gave her an address in the Russian capital to which she could write during the next month, warning her at the same time to be careful in what she

said, to mention no names, and to avoid all references to politics, as his correspondence would run the risk of being edited by the police. Inside the envelope on which the address was written he had enclosed forty francs.

"You'll probably find a little money useful one of these days," he said. "Keep it till you really want it. You can't wear more than one pair of boots at once, and there are other things more important. I don't want you to thank me. You can go and sing something instead, and do your best as it's for the last time."

Arithelli rose at once and went to the piano, eager to do something that might give him pleasure.

She could play for herself now. Emile had succeeded in teaching her a few easy accompaniments, so that he could listen without distraction.

She hesitated for a minute, turning over his big music book, and then chose the popular song of the *café-chantants* and streets, the famous "*La Colombe*" with its lilting time, and mingled gaiety and sorrow. One heard it everywhere, sung in Spanish, in the local patois, and in French, by *artistes* in the theatres, by factory girls, and sailors, and market people. The *gamins* and beggars whistled and hummed it in the streets and squares.

Emile walked up and down the room as he

listened. He had made her sing in the hope of lessening in a small degree the strain he was enduring, but what had possessed her to choose this song of all others? The words told of one who was about to set sail, and lingered bidding adieu to his Nina, the woman he loved.

*“Le jour où quittant la terre pour l’océan,
Je dis, priez Dieu, priez Dieu pour votre enfant.
Avant que nous mettre en route je crus revoir,
Nina! qui pleurait sans doute de désespoir.”*

One could hear the rocking of the boat at anchor, the rippling of the out-going tide.

In the second verse the time was changed, the words were hurried and insistent.

*“Nina! si je succombe, et qu’un beau soir,
Une blanche colombe vient te voir,
Ouvre-lui ta fenêtre car ce sera,
Mon âme qui peut-être te reviendra.”*

Her voice had grown weaker since her illness, and she sang with visible exertion and faulty breathing, but it was still the golden voice of the Israelitish woman, and there was the same *timbre* that had attracted him, and made him speak to her that afternoon in May at the station.

And all that had only happened six months ago! When she had finished he said nothing in approval,

but he asked her to sing again, and she understood, and was pleased.

“ You may thank the Fates for having given you a voice,” he told her. “ It’s better than a face. It lasts longer. No man having once heard you would listen to another woman.”

It was the first compliment he had ever made her, but Arithelli did not answer. Her back was turned towards him as she gathered together the music.

He could see that her whole body was trembling with repressed sobs. If he could only have been sure they were for him, he would have taken her in his arms. She was sorry he was going, perhaps, in a way, but not in the way he wanted. She had become dependent upon him, and he had filled a certain place in her life. If she made a scene it was entirely his own fault. Farewells were always a mistake, and he had been foolish enough to allow her to sing sentimental verses about doves and people’s wandering souls. She was over-tired and over-wrought, and a woman’s tears were more often due to physical than to mental reasons. So he argued, trying to convince himself, yet knowing all the time that Arithelli was not one of the women whose emotions are on the surface.

Once before he had seen her cry, and now as then he stood apart. It was for Vardri to dry her tears.

He glanced at the clock. Of course it was wrong, but he knew by the shadows that filled the room that it must be time for her to leave if she was to appear in public again to-night.

He must hurry the interview to a close, for he could not play his part much longer.

“ You ought to be glad to get rid of me, Arithelli. *Vous avez la chance!* What have I given you but work and grumbles, eh? ”

The soft, broken voice answered him :

“ I shall feel afraid without you.”

“ You will have Vardri,— your lover.” His tone was brutal as the blow of a knife. The natural animal jealousy of a man had risen in him again. When he was between stone walls, she would have the warmth of a lover’s arms; every nerve in his own body would know it, and long for that which he had himself resigned.

He would have long hours to sit and think the thoughts that drive men to insanity or self-destruction.

“ Yes, but one can care in different ways, and you have done so many things for me.”

The man drew in his breath sharply. The knife was in her hand now, but she had stabbed unconsciously. He knew that she spoke quite simply, thinking only of his care for her physical well-being.

Truly he had done things, things that he would have given several years of life to undo.

Now he had that for which he craved,—the assurance that she cared, that she would miss him. Still he did not delude himself. He knew that what she felt towards him was not the love between a woman and her mate, but the affection of dependence, of habit. Yet for such as it was his soul uttered thanksgiving. Any other woman gifted with a less sweet nature would have felt for him nothing but hatred, but in Fatalité's mind neither spite nor malice ever found a place. The petty vices of womankind had never been hers. He knew now that he had been something to her, and that knowledge would make sunshine for him even in the shadow of a prison. It gave him courage also to play out the tragi-comedy to the end, to make a brave jest, to lie convincingly.

“We needn't make each other eternal adieux, *mon enfant*. You must not take all I said about Siberian dungeons *au sérieux*. Russia isn't quite as dangerous as it's made out to be. Of course the police keep a watch more or less on the “suspects,” but we know all their tricks, and how to avoid them. Plenty of us go to St. Petersburg and even to Kara and come back again. The Schlusselburg fortress is about the only place we haven't succeeded in get-

ting out of yet. It's fairly easy to manage a false passport. You can write to me at the address I've given you."

It was all over now, and he was alone. He had taken both her hands for an instant, and felt the convulsive clinging of the thin fingers. He had longed to kiss them, but dared not trust himself. His words were only such as might have been used by anyone of the Brotherhood.

"Au revoir, camarade!"

"Au revoir!"

Her tears were falling still, though she answered him steadily enough.

Then she turned away, pulling down her veil, and he saw her grope blindly for the fastening of the door. It shut gently behind her, and he was alone. He sat down by the table with its litter of books and newspapers, and stared dully round the room which her passing had left more hopeless and ugly than ever.

Life itself would be more *fâde* and ugly now. As well for him that after to-day he would have no time to sit and brood. It would be all stern reality soon, enough to cure him of lovesickness.

First the work and risks of a secret printing press in some cellar or sordid room behind a shop, and

later on the inevitable police-raid, a trial that would be no trial with the condemnation signed beforehand, and afterwards the *travaux forcés*, the long marches, the agonies of farewell at the Siberian boundary-post — not for him, for his were said, but for his companions in misery — the miseries of the sick and dying, the partial starvation, and the horrors of dirt and vermin. There were sure to be some women too among the “*politicals*,” and he would be obliged to watch their sufferings.

There would be no imaginary grievances in that life at all events.

On the floor, as it had dropped from among the music there lay a photograph, face downwards.

He picked it up and looked back at the childish, smiling face, the tiny, rounded figure of Marie Roumanoff.

“*Tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse.*”

His mouth twisted into a cynical smile. She had been a true prophetess when she had written that.

He tore the picture across, and threw it upon the rest of the débris.

The Roumanoff would never haunt his dreams again.

Her portrait was easily destroyed. A flimsy thing of print and paper, as slight and fragile as herself.

Of Arithelli he possessed no tangible likeness, but he would have her always with him, for her image was seared deep upon both heart and brain.

The Witch sailed out of Barcelona harbour with the early morning tide. Besides Emile and Vladimir, and a small picked crew, she carried an assortment of strangely-shaped machines, things that looked like the inside of a clock, and were full of wheels and cogs, firearms, and ammunition, some copies of a revolutionist manual on street fighting tactics, and other inflammatory literature.

Their plan was to enter Russia by way of Finland, leaving all the things there to be smuggled through by degrees.

When they came to the frontier they would part company. Emile would make his way towards the city that holds its trembling autocrat as closely guarded in his palace as any convict in the mines, while Vladimir was to go back to Spain overland to report success or failure in the landing and disposal of their dangerous cargo.

All day the two men sat together, talking, plotting, preparing for all contingencies.

There were no feminine voices to be heard on board the yacht now, no singing on deck in the evenings, no hint of the presence of a woman, either as wife, mistress, or companion.

They neither discussed nor recalled these vanished days, though one had hours of memory and regret, and the other was consumed with a savage hunger for that which he had lost.

Both had taken upon themselves vows that put them outside the pale of human ties and affections.

The Goddess whom they both served had risen, claiming their allegiance, their service, and with the lives and ways of mortal women they had no concern. The Cause had triumphed.

CHAPTER XX

“Do you not know I am a woman?”

As You Like It.

SOBRENSKI was a man who wasted no time in making up his mind. His success as a leader had depended upon his swiftness of action and unscrupulousness, and his latest manœuvres had turned out an admirable success, upon which he might safely congratulate himself.

The day following the resolution of the Committee, he had written to Arithelli, telling her to come to his flat to receive instructions. She would arrive in due time, and then he would explain things.

He wondered whether she would faint or scream or perhaps refuse, but probably she would be easier to manage now that Poleski was safely out of the way. He had schemed that business well too, and could now spare all his attention for Vardri and the girl.

As to the amount of work they both did, they would be no great loss, for he could easily supply

their places by other human machines who would carry out his desires without question. The majority of the men who composed the circle were completely dominated by him, and incapable of opposing his will or argument, and by some he was worshipped as a hero. Callous of suffering in others, he was equally indifferent to it for himself, and if he did not spare his tools he also slaved incessantly day and night.

The large bare room in which he sat possessed very little furniture and no signs of comfort. There were a quantity of books piled on the floor and mantelpiece, and the centre space was filled by an enormous bureau heaped with a mass of printed and written papers, for besides his extensive correspondence he was part-editor of one of the Anarchist journals, which he enlivened by daring and sarcastic contributions. The fragment of the letter that Arithelli had dropped, lay open in front of him. He read it through again and smiled to himself.

“I’ll give up even the Cause for your sake,” Vardri had written. “Seeing how these men have made you suffer has changed my views. There must be something wrong about our ideas if they produce this cruelty to women. Sobrenski and the others are killing you slowly. I wanted struggle and ex-

citement at one time, and whether it meant Life or Death it was all the same. There was no one to care. Now I want Life and Love and You!"

Another madman like Gaston de Barrés! How alike all these effusions were, all in the same strain. They had found a pile of ravings when they had searched among the property of the heroine of that affair. These were the people who did an incredible amount of harm, who were even more dangerous than the ordinary traitor.

He pushed the letter underneath some others, and Arithelli had knocked more than once, before he called "*Entrez!*"

He saluted her with a cold scrutiny, telling her to wait till he had finished. He invariably made a point of using no title in addressing her, and never even gave her the customary Anarchist greeting of *camarade*. He did not invite her to sit down, and she would have been surprised if he had done so. There was another chair at the far end of the room, and she did not trouble to fetch it. Her heart was still further weakened by her illness, and she was breathless after climbing two long flights of stairs. She leant up against the wall, breathing quickly, and thankful for a few moments' respite.

She supposed she was required to play "errand-boy" as usual, and to go through the well-known

routine: A crumpled-up slip of paper, which she must hide in her hair or dress, a long walk, or a ride in the electric tram if she happened to have any money, and then perhaps at the end of it she would find the man for whom she was seeking absent, and then she would have to wait till he returned. It was never safe to leave a message. Everything had to be given directly into the hands of those for whom it was intended, and she had spent many weary hours in the rooms of Sobrenski's followers.

She studied his face as he rapidly stamped his letters, flinging them on to a pile of others that lay ready. It crossed her mind how Emile had once likened a certain group of the conspirators to a pack of court cards, saying that they were alternately red and black.

Sobrenski's hair and small peaked beard were of a curiously unpleasant colour, and his thin lips, pointed teeth and long sloping jaw gave him a wolfish appearance. His eyes, deep-set and narrow, were too close together to satisfy a student of Lavater as to his capacity for truthfulness. The forehead alone was good, and showed reasoning and intellect. He was about fifty, and like all fair men looked less than his age. He was better dressed, and altogether more careful of his appearance than most of the other men, though he spent

nothing on luxuries and never touched the *absinthe*, to which most of them were addicted. The sole luxuries in which he indulged were Work and Power.

"Probably you have heard a great deal of talk about spies lately," he began, addressing Arithelli in French. "For some time I have suspected one of our own number of treachery. However, one cannot condemn without proofs. For these I have been waiting and they have now come into my hands. I'm perfectly satisfied that the man I have all along suspected is a traitor, and there is no need to delay action any longer. I suppose Poleski has informed you of how we treat those who are unwise enough to betray us?"

"Yes."

She was on her guard now, and stood upright, all her languor gone. Why could he not say what he meant at once? She wondered why he had taken the trouble to seek for proofs of anyone's guilt. Enough for a man of his type to find an obstruction in his path. He would need no authority but his own for removing it. She hated him all the more for his parade of justice. It had not occurred to her that his speech was a prelude to anything that concerned Vardri. If anyone was implied she imagined it was herself. These men were never

happy unless they were suspecting evil of someone. The Anarchist leader found in her incomprehension merely another sign of feminine stupidity. Her outward air of indifference was as irritating to him as it had been to the Hippodrome Manager. Sobrenski's blood had never stirred for any woman, however charming, and Arithelli's type of looks was repulsive to him. He loathed her thinness and pallor, her silence and immobility of expression. He vowed inwardly that she should look less indifferent before he had finished with her.

"You do not appear to have the least idea of the identity of the man to whom I am referring," he continued. "Your friend Vardri is not a very careful person. He is young, and shall we say, a little foolish. It is always risky to say or write anything against the Cause one is supposed to be serving."

"To say *or write*." It dawned upon her all at once. The piece of the letter she had missed, had been dropped in the stable up in the hills and found by Sobrenski. It was all her own fault, sheer rank carelessness. Emile had so often warned her against her fatal habit of leaving everything about. She never locked up anything, jewellery, clothes, money or papers.

Perhaps in the hurry of dressing that night, she had only taken with her the first page, and when she was out her rooms had been searched, and the rest stolen. Sobrenski would stop at nothing to get the evidence he wanted. If she accused him of having taken it he would simply deny the charge, and to seem anxious would be further evidence that the letter contained something that would compromise either Vardri or herself. In any case it appeared that the mischief was done. To expect either justice or mercy from her enemy was out of the question. She would try and fight him with his own weapon, feign ignorance, tell lies if necessary.

“Vardri? What has he done?”

The note of surprise in her voice was well assumed and she could control her face, but her hands betrayed her. Sobrenski had seen the blue veins stand out and the knuckles whiten unnaturally with the pressure on the black fan she carried to shield her eyes in the street.

“Done?” he echoed contemptuously. “Nothing so far. He has only talked and written. It is to provide against his doing anything important that the Committee have decided upon his removal. There was a meeting held last night and the voting was unanimous. Vardri has been condemned as a

traitor to his vows, and a danger to everyone connected with our work."

"Condemned without a hearing!" the girl flamed out. "*Mon Dieu!* Your justice! What has he done?"

"Have you a right to question the judgment of the Committee?" The voice was like a scourge falling on bare flesh. Arithelli drew her shoulders together involuntarily.

"No!" she answered.

"Yet you do it! These womanly inconsistencies are a little fatiguing."

Sobrenski caressed his beard with a narrow, bloodless hand, on the middle finger of which was a curious ring of twisted gold wire.

He waited to see if she would make any further protest, but she set her lips firmly and refused to speak. There was nothing more to be said on her side. Evidently Sobrenski had found the letter, and when or where it had been found mattered not at all. He continued:

"The sentence has been passed and it falls upon you to execute it."

The answer came back swiftly:

"And if I refuse?"

For once in his life Sobrenski was taken aback, and experienced a new sensation, that of surprise.

He looked at her with almost approval. If he was cruel he was also courageous, and able to appreciate the virtue in others.

"You know what your refusal implies?" he questioned, more gently than he had yet spoken. "You refused some time ago to carry a message. You will perhaps remember that I gave you the choice between doing as you were told, or—" he gesticulated expressively. "You were wise then. I hope you will be wise now."

Arithelli's thoughts were going at racing speed. No one could be long in a room alone with Sobrenski without being impressed by his overpowering personality. He affected her in a way that no one else ever did, in provoking her to futile outbursts of defiance and anger. She had never lost her head with anyone else, but he always made her incapable of reasoning, raging one minute, and cowed the next. Hitherto Emile had always been there to screen and protect her, to stand between her and her enemy. She knew now why he had so often hoped to see her in her coffin.

"I can't murder! I undertook to work for the Cause, but not that—*Mon Dieu!* not that!"

"We don't talk about murder," Sobrenski sneered. "We merely 'remove' those who have proved themselves untrustworthy. You undertook

to obey orders, I believe. You may contradict me if I am incorrect."

He leant forward with the glittering eyes of the fanatic. "You talk of murder and forget that to us human life is nothing. Do you think you will save Vardri by refusing? Am I to suppose that he has infected you also with the taint of disloyalty? It is your business to loathe a traitor as we do. You wear your badge, but do you never read the words on it? Poleski used to tell me great things of your enthusiasm, your devotion. Now I am putting you to the test. You like to act a picturesque part, it seems, to wear boy's clothes, to sing, to be the only woman among us, to act the heroine. We do not want acting here. This is Life, not the stage. Now you are asked to give a practical proof of your loyalty!"

The pitiless tongue lashed, and Arithelli shrank against the wall, her hands over her eyes. There had been stories current among the younger members of the Barcelona Anarchists that Sobrenski possessed the power of hypnotism and did not scruple to use it. Some of the most daring and successful outrages of the past years had been carried out under his direction, and executed by these youths. He always made a point of choosing men who were

highly strung and impressionable. He was known to boast that after three interviews with him he could make anyone, either man or woman, into a will-less automaton.

He exhorted, jeered, encouraged and derided, finally giving Arithelli five minutes in which to make her decision. She did not keep him waiting, though he could scarcely hear the murmured words of assent. Her nerve was broken at last. She would promise anything, do anything if only he would let her go. Dazed with fear and misery, she watched him get up, unlock a drawer of the bureau and come across to her holding out something.

"I shall arrange for you to be together one night up in the hut. I don't know whether you have any idea of shooting, but you can hardly miss at such close range."

The brutal words steadied her, and drove back the feeling of mental paralysis. She realised suddenly all that her promise meant. Vardri had given her love, and in return she was to give him Death! Her own dawning love had enabled her to see more clearly what his devotion meant. With the growth of a woman's soul she had also begun to experience womanly emotions, fear, anxiety, the need of sympathy and affection.

She snatched the pistol from Sobrenski's hand, and he stepped back a pace, throwing up his arm instinctively as she raised, levelled and fired.

The weapon clicked harmlessly, her hand dropped to her side, and she stood shivering, and wondering at her own madness. The whole thing had been done without thinking, as an animal driven into a corner turns, snarling and showing its teeth.

Sobrenski recovered himself first and laughed.

"So you thought it was loaded?" he said. "Do you take me for a fool? Allow me to congratulate you on your — failure!"

Then changing his tone of sarcasm to command: "You must hide that pistol carefully. Put it inside your dress or somewhere safe. I suppose you would like to march down the *Paséo 'de Gracia*, carrying it in your hand, and wearing a tragic expression,— and get locked up by the first agent de police you meet! You have pluck enough, but you should avoid these exhibitions of hysteria."

He gripped her by the shoulder, swung her round, and pointed to the door, "*Allez!*"

CHAPTER XXI

“My crown is without leaves,
For she sits in the dust and grieves,
Now we are come to our kingdom.”

“Anthony and Cleopatra,” KIPLING.

ONCE more the procession of conspirators toiled on its way up the irregular mountain path. The horses slipped and stumbled under their unskilful riders, the mules climbed steadily upwards. No one spoke.

As usual Arithelli led the way.

Vardri, who had arrived last of all, rode forward to join her, but was curtly ordered to the rear by Sobrenski.

They should see enough of each other later on,—when it was time.

Before they started on their ride he spoke to Arithelli alone, and gave her his final instructions, and saw for himself that the pistol she wore at her belt was properly charged. He never left anything to chance, especially in important undertakings such as the present one.

"There will not be a long meeting to-night," he said. "You will have an hour free to do your work. You hear?"

His eyes were fixed on hers, compelling an answer. None came, though she bowed her head in token of acquiescence, and though he could hear no word Sobrenski was satisfied. He had seen that shrinking attitude, that mechanical gesture before. In the plot to assassinate General Morales there had been a young Spanish student who had given some trouble. He had developed a conscience at the last minute, and vowed that he could not kill an old and defenceless man, that he would rather die himself.

He had died, and so had Morales, and both by the explosion of the bomb that had been launched by the hand of the former.

Sobrenski held rightly that those who meddled with politics on either side must dispense with such useless things as scruples.

The night was still and sultry, with a full moon hanging low in the sky. The weather had been unnaturally warm for the time of year, all day, down in the city.

They were all glad when they had mounted above the sea-level.

There was a little breeze met them, and the tired and patiently plodding horses raised their heads.

Arithelli drew a long breath of relief as she shifted in her saddle, and glanced back to see if they were all in sight.

The manta in which she was wrapped stifled her, and the weight of her own hair under the wig and sombrero made her head ache and throb violently.

As they rode she rehearsed her plans in her own mind, telling herself over and over again the things that she must say and do when she was alone with Vardri.

To-night would see Sobrenski's triumph, his grand coup, and when it was all over perhaps she would have peace.

How slowly they all seemed to ride, she thought. She wondered how many of the other men knew that she was chosen to act the part of murderer. Some of them had been kind to her in a rough way, especially the older ones.

But even if they did pity her a little, not one among them but would expect her to do the thing that they would consider obviously her duty.

No one would raise a voice on her behalf, whatever their private sentiments.

The majority of them would probably look upon

her as a heroine, for she would have rid them of a spy, a traitor.

She could only hope that she might keep her brain clear, her courage firm till the supreme moment.

Once in the course of that awful day her nerves had given out in physical collapse, and her shaking hands had let fall the mirror of Agnès Sorél.

It lay on the floor in her bedroom, broken in three places.

Her early days in Ireland had given her a belief in the omens of good and evil, for in the "emerald gem of the Western world" superstition runs riot.

The faith in it was in her blood, though it needed no broken mirror to tell her what dread thing awaited her, towards which she must advance, urged by fate.

She had only written one letter, and that one was to Emile. Now that he was gone there was no one else who cared.

Something told her now that his last words had only been an attempt to comfort her, to ease her mind, and that she would wait in vain for his return.

Estelle would weep for a little while, and drink a great deal to drown her tears, and then forget.

They were nearly at the hut now. She could

see it, a grotesque shadow thrown across the silvered earth.

She slipped off and walked, leading her mule by the bridle.

Behind her were subdued curses, the rattle of slipping hoofs and falling stones, as the animals climbed the last and steepest piece of road, which ended in the plateau on which the building stood.

In front of it was a single large tree, but most of the ground close by bore nothing higher than dwarf shrubs and long grass.

When the cavalcade drew up and dismounted, Vardri was discovered to be missing.

He had been late in starting, lagged behind the others and dropped out of sight before they were scarcely clear of the town. Being the last of the file his disappearance had not at first been remarked.

Sobrenski refused to allow of time being wasted in a search.

He ordered the rest of the men up into the loft, and Arithelli to her work of unharnessing.

He himself remained standing in the shadow of the doorway, his eyes narrowed with anger, his thin lips compressed till they were merely a line.

Here was a complication that he had not foreseen. For the first time in his life his wit and cunning had been at fault.

He must have been mad not to have kept a sharper lookout on Vardri, but he had reckoned he was secure with Arithelli as decoy.

Could it be possible that she had been mad enough to warn Vardri? If so, then why was she here herself?

Either she had more courage or else she was more foolish even than he could have believed it possible for a female creature to be. Women took good care of their own skins in general!

If Vardri meant to try and escape, surely they would have gone together.

Perhaps his, Sobrenski's, detailed descriptions of the fate of others who had attempted flight had made her decide that it would be safer to remain and throw herself on the mercy of himself and his companions.

He might have miscalculated the force of her attraction for Vardri, but he felt perfectly certain that she was reduced to a state of mechanical imbecility. She could not escape now at all events, even if she suddenly changed her mind.

He would give them both five minutes, and then if Vardri did not appear — !

He began to walk up and down outside, like some prowling animal awaiting its prey.

At regular intervals his shadow crossed and re-crossed the patch of light from the open door.

Meanwhile Vardri was riding leisurely up the slope, reining back his horse, and stopping at intervals to put a fair distance between himself and the others. He intended to make a chance of seeing Arithelli alone again, so he meant to wait till the whole crew, and especially Sobrenski, were safely embarked on their eternal discussions. Then he would slip in and help her with the animals, and live in Paradise again for a little space of time.

He had been to her rooms earlier in the day but she had sent down a message to beg him to excuse her. She had a headache, and was lying down, so he had been obliged to go away unsolaced, and longing for the evening.

Now that she had given him her promise to go with him to Austria, there was only to arrange the day and the hour of their departure. For once he was alive to the necessity for prompt action. There was her safety to be considered now. When he had been alone it had not mattered how anything was done or not done, but now everything was different. The world itself was another place. He had already actually written and posted a tentative letter to his father, such a letter as he could never

have written if only his interests had been concerned, but he found any sacrifice an easy one now, even the sacrifice of pride.

There was no reason why they should not start to-morrow. It would be safer to get out of the place by going round by the Mediterranean and thence across by way of Italy.

Water-travelling was cheaper, too. He laughed to himself to think how practical he was becoming. How strange it would seem to live in a civilised fashion again, to not be obliged to look at every sou before it was spent, to have servants to wait upon one; enough to eat and drink, and the luxury of cleanliness.

Yet the vagabond life had had its charm, too. He had encountered kindness often, generally from those in more evil plight than his own, and there had been flowers and music and sunshine. True, he had felt horribly ill and dejected on some days, and his wretched cough was an annoyance to himself and to other people, but at times he felt ready for anything, and more energetic than any three of those lazy Spaniards.

Love and Arithelli would be a sure antidote for any misery or disease. For her he had created a House of Dreams, and now the dreams were on the verge of becoming realities. Instead of the sand

and stones of that desert that men call Life, a rainbow-coloured future lay stretched out before him. Sunshine and the summertime of love, all that he had ever hoped for, were coming nearer. And joy was hovering near at hand, till he could almost touch her flying robe. Soon he would hold her in his arms, would possess her entirely.

How different Arithelli was from all other women! With her there was never caprice or fickleness. Whatever she said was his law, whatever she wished to do was the right thing.

Now he had abjured the Revolution, his father would be only too glad to have him back, to see him married to a woman of Arithelli's charm and breeding. There had never been any quarrel with his family, except when he had joined the Red Flag party, and it was only natural that they should quarrel over that. Love or the Revolution? There would never be any more doubt now as to which he would choose.

In the old days he had preferred starvation, and the freedom to act, and think as he liked. He had gloried in being an outcast, in suffering for the Cause. Life had been hard at times, but he had known men of ideals and enthusiasms and there had been a certain fascination in the excitement of being hunted. But now that was all over and a

new day was dawning for them both, for himself and for Arithelli.

He spoke to his horse and stirred it into a quicker pace.

They must be well out of the way and she would think he was never coming.

Inside the stable Arithelli, tall and straight in her scarlet shirt, moved to and fro at her work, hanging up saddles and bridles, carrying pails of water, ranging on either side of the hut the horses and the mules. Tortured as she was with anxiety, she did not forget the wants of her friends the animals. It came across her mind how once when she had said to Vardri, "Let us see to the horses first," he had said half in jest, "If I were a Spaniard I should be jealous. You always think of the animals before everything else."

One by one the rest of the conspirators tramped heavily up the ladder, leaving her alone with Sobrenski, who stood with his back to the doorway, following her with his eyes as she moved to and fro in the shadows cast by the solitary lamps.

Before he mounted the ladder in his turn, he came across the hut, took her by the shoulder and spoke to her. "Be careful how you do your work, for if it is not well done others will do it for you."

She could not answer; she shuddered at his touch; her hands went up and covered her face.

Sobrenski turned and mounted the worn rungs of the narrow ladder with a lithe, active step. He was quite sure of her now. She would not fail to carry out his will.

CHAPTER XXII

"Il n'y a que l'amour et la mort."

FOR a few minutes after he had gone, Arithelli stood motionless, still with her hands pressed tightly over her eyes, trying to command her brain to work clearly. Her will and her limbs seemed paralysed. She could only wait for Vardri's approach. Once she prayed an inarticulate wordless prayer, that inspiration might be sent her to find a way out of this *impasse* in which there seemed neither light nor opening.

Time was passing, and every moment was bringing her nearer the most appalling destiny that could ever be meted out to any woman. If she did Sobrenski's bidding she would be not only a murderer, but the murderer of the being she loved most in the world. Vardri, who was so different from all the other men; Vardri, who could never bear anything to be hurt, or even to be made uncomfortable. She knew that it was perfectly useless for both of them to attempt to escape. Someone was

most likely posted at the window of the loft, they would get no distance on foot without being overtaken, and if she attempted to lead out any of the horses or mules, the noise would probably attract attention.

Her hands fell to her side, and her head went up as she listened intently. So he was coming, after all. In that undisturbed space and clear dry air, sound travelled quickly, and she could hear the approaching hoof-beats while he was still some way off. With the knowledge of his approach the blood flowed again warmly in her veins and courage and decision came back to her. Her senses, unnaturally acute, told her that Vardri had now dismounted and was leading his horse. She could distinguish his footsteps, and then the monotonous regular footfalls of his mount. She ran out into the patch of moonlight, casting a hurried backward glance at the side of the hut. Thank God! the window was on the other side!

Vardri was coming slowly towards her, his horse's bridle over his arm. Before she covered the distance between them she made a gesture that enjoined silence and stopped his greeting. "Don't bring your horse in," she whispered. "Tie him up out of the way over there, a good way off the hut. I'll explain presently."

In another moment Vardri was beside her in the hut and had her in his arms.

“What is it, *mon petit*? There must be something wrong. Has Sobrenski —?”

“No, no, he has done nothing. It’s just that I don’t want you to be up here too long to-night. I want you to do something for me. Will you, Vardri?”

“Do you think you’ll need to ask me twice to do anything for you, dear?”

He stood with his hands on her shoulders, his dark eyes gazing down at her hungrily. “Did you think I was never coming? I stayed behind on purpose. I felt that Sobrenski intended to prevent our talking together.” Arithelli snatched eagerly at his words. They had given her the clue she wanted.

“Yes, that’s it. It’s dangerous for me if we are seen often together. I’ve done something so mad and foolish, Vardri, you must help me to put it right,—you *can*. Those letters you have written me saying all sorts of things against the Cause,—I left a piece of one about somewhere,—I don’t know where,—and Sobrenski found it. He has just told me that in about half an hour’s time before all the rest of them leave, he is going to send on one of the men in advance. He will get down

to the town before us, go to my rooms and yours and collect all the letters that have passed between us; and use them, as then he will have what he has always wanted,— the proofs that we are what he would call traitors. And when he has these proofs, neither of us will be safe for an instant. It will mean death to both of us sooner or later. But even Sobrenski can't murder us without sufficient evidence. He will be obliged to make some formal parade of justice to put it all before the rest of the society. If he doesn't get our letters he will not have sufficient evidence."

"But if we go away together to-night, as we intended? We've got a start. We can take the best horses. That is the best plan."

Arithelli shook her head. "Listen to me, dear, and believe in a woman's wisdom for once. If we go to-night and together, we are bound to be recaptured before we are out of Barcelona. By doing what I suggest we avoid suspicion, we give ourselves breathing-space, time to arrange a disguise, to think of all sorts of things that we have overlooked. We have everything in our favour to-night, Sobrenski does not know you are here yet. If you go soon you will get away without his having seen you at all. Here is the key of my room. Go there first, and you will find all your own letters

in a wooden box in my big trunk. That isn't locked. Open it and burn them all. Then go on to your own room, do the same with yours and stay there. If they raid my room, they will find nothing suspicious. You could pretend you were ill, and that's the only reason you haven't come to-night, and I am here doing my work as usual. Nothing could be less suspicious. Then when they are off their guard we can escape."

The minutes were flying, Death thrusting his lean face before the rosy face of Love. Sobren-ski's phrase sounded in her ears like the tolling of a bell. "You have an hour free to do your work." An hour, only an hour! How long had they been there already? Time and all else alike seemed blurred. All her will must be concentrated upon one thing — to make Vardri leave her as quickly as possible. Yet she dare not show a sign of haste or emotion lest he should suspect something amiss and refuse to go.

"Dear, it is a wonderful plan this, of yours," Vardri was saying. "But how can I leave you here alone with these devils? It makes me cold to think of it."

"You'll leave me because I shall be safer alone. You *must* see that, *mon ami*." She clung to him, putting up her face towards his. Every art of

womanhood must be used to weave a spell to send him from her and to save him. "Will you not do as I ask you?"

"I'll do anything in the world for you," the boy broke out eagerly; "I'd have my hand cut off to save you a minute's pain."

"I know, *mon ami*. And this is such a little thing, and so much depends upon its being done quickly."

What was that? A step on the ladder? She could not control a violent start. No, it was only a creaking rung, a stamp from one of the mules.

"But you haven't broken your promise to me. You swear to come away with me soon?"

"To-morrow if you will. Once the letters are burnt we are almost safe. Only one day more. It doesn't make any difference."

"It does to me, *mon petit*. Every moment, every hour without you is time wasted."

"But you'll go, dear, before Sobrenski sees us together?"

"My sweet, if it is for your good, of course I will go. You're right about the letters; I ought to have known it wasn't safe to keep them. As you say, they've got no circumstantial evidence if those are destroyed, and it only means a few more hours' delay in our getting off. I'll go, darling. I'll get

down the hills in no time. It's the best horse of the lot, that one outside. But before I go give me yourself for a few minutes."

Arithelli let him lead her unresisting towards the corner of the hut, and lay her gently back upon a truss of hay that he had covered with a cloak. She had not the strength to deny him their last few minutes together. Every fibre in her own nature, the lover, the mother, the child, were all crying out for him. How gentle he had been, how he had always cared for her. No one had ever touched her like this before, spoken to her in this caressing voice. Emile had been kind in his way, but he had been always rough. Her own emotions had always lain buried deeply, and now they had been called to life she longed for the natural expression of her love through the medium of physical things, by word and touch.

"Now for my reward," Vardri said. "I want to take your hair down."

Arithelli bent her head towards him without speaking and he drew the pins, and undid the braid with deft fingers, spreading it out till it covered her as with a veil.

"If only I could paint you! How beautiful you are to-night, but how still and cold! Fatalité, tell me you love me a little, *mon cœur!*"

She put her arms round his neck, laying her cheek against his. “*Mon ami*, I love you!”

He held her in his arms as one holds a child, rocking her to and fro. “*Voilà chérie!*” he whispered. “After to-morrow I shall have you always, I shall never let you go again. My dream is coming true.”

Arithelli listened with dry eyes and an aching heart. She was past crying, and her brain felt curiously reasonable and alert. She could not send him from her at once, yet with every passing second Death drew stealthily nearer and nearer. Time swept on relentless and inflexible.

“Perhaps you will be disappointed in me one of these days, find me depressing and full of moods. I’ve always been so lonely, you know, till I met you. *Je suis une âme détachée.*”

“Never again while I’m alive! I think of you and with you. When you are happy I know it, and when you are miserable I know it too. Fatalité! Fatalité! believe that I don’t want anything in return. I’ll wait on you, work for you, lie, starve, steal, do anything. I only want to know you’re there, to have the right to serve you, to feel you don’t hate me. I couldn’t go on living if I lost you. Since the first day I saw you at the Hippodrome you’ve haunted me. I led Don Juan down to the entrance to the ring. You don’t remember? How

should you? I've never forgotten! You smiled and thanked me. You looked so strange beside Estelle and those other women."

He was kneeling beside her, his lips pressed against the hollow of her arm, from which the loose red sleeve had slipped back to above the elbow. Under his passionate words Arithelli sat like a being entranced, unseeing, unhearing. The inscrutable eyes set in the rigid face gave her the likeness to some carven thing.

"Fatalité! Fatalité!"

The sound of his voice came to her as from a distance. She roused herself, and tried to smile. "*Mon ami*, I'm a little tired to-night, a little nervous; I was thinking about the letters! I shall feel so much safer when they're burnt."

"I'll go at once — just one moment. Arithelli, you do believe that I love you, and that I want nothing? See, I'll not even touch your hand if it doesn't please you."

The soft hand was laid gently on his. "But if it *does* please me, *mon camarade* —"

"*Dieu!* How sweet you are! But don't call me '*Camarade*,' *mon petit*. Those wolves above call each other that!"

"I won't, if you hate it. Yes, that's really love to give all and take nothing." Arithelli spoke

dreamily. "Emile made me sing to him before he went away; you remember 'L'Adieu' of Schubert? He loved it.

*"La mort est une amie,
Qui rend la liberté."*

"C'est bien vrai ça! I used to sing it without thinking at one time. How alike all those songs are. Always Death;—Death and Liberty!"

"Don't talk of those things, dear. It's going to be Life for both of us — after to-morrow."

"I was thinking of poor Emile."

"He was always fond of you. He'll be glad when he hears you're married and safe."

"Yes, he'll be glad. Don't talk any more for a minute, dear, then just say *au revoir* to me and go as quickly as you can. I want to be quiet. It's good to be loved. How gentle you are! Emile was always so rough when he touched me."

Vardri hung over her, caressing her with infinite tenderness. Of all men in the world he was surely the happiest to have known this sweet and womanly Arithelli, the Arithelli that no one else had ever seen. He kissed the heavy, closed lids and stroked back the hair from her forehead.

A faint intoxicating odour of jasmine hovered about her, for she was Eastern in her love of per-

fumes. The stifling, dirty hut became a Paradise while she lay thus in his arms.

Once again they kissed and clung together. Though Arithelli's lips burnt, they scorched with the fires of despair rather than with those of passion.

In silence Vardri helped her to her feet, and they walked together to the door.

"You'll come to me to-morrow," Arithelli said.

"To-morrow we shall be safe. We'll be out of this hell altogether in another day or two, *à la bonne heure!* You're not afraid, Fatalité?"

"I shan't be — when the letters are safe. Take care of yourself, *mon ami, et à bientôt!*"

"*Mon Dieu!* what pluck you have! How I love you for it! Go back and rest, dear, till those brutes come down. Give me your hand again, Fatalité, *bien aimée! gardez-vous, mais gardez-vous!*"

She answered him steadily. "*À demain. Adieu, mon ami.* Ride as quickly as you can, but lead your horse for the first few minutes."

CHAPTER XXIII

“Le jeu est fait, rien ne vas plus!”

HE was gone, and Arithelli was back in the hut again, and now the worst of it all was still to come. If Vardri was to have a fair start she must wait out the hour alone, realising every moment of the time what awaited her at the end of it.

A mad impulse seized her to rush up the steps to the loft, interrupt the meeting, defy them all and boast how she had schemed her lover's escape, and laugh at them and their plots, goad them into shooting her at once and finishing it all quickly. She felt that she could not endure any more suspense and strain. Anything would be better than this interminable, awful waiting in the semi-darkness and loneliness, with neither friend nor lover at hand, no single human to take her part or defend her. Emile had gone and now Vardri, and she must face everything alone. If she waited Vardri would have perhaps half an hour's grace and while they were dealing with her it would give him still another few minutes, and every minute counted.

She fought down the temptation, and began to move about, speaking to the mules and horses, taking down saddles and bridles. She must not be too quiet, or they might suspect something, and come down sooner to see if she were still there. She must pretend to be busy, play out the play to the end.

She unhooked the lantern from its nail and placed it on the ground, and then stood still again to listen.

The smothered hum of voices grew louder overhead. It stopped suddenly, and she could only hear Sobrenski's slow, incisive tones. No doubt they were listening to him as to one inspired while he preached his gospel of destruction. Arithelli shivered, pressing her hands over her ears that she might shut out the sound of that hated voice that had bidden her outrage her sex.

She stumbled towards the bed of hay, still warm with the impress of her own figure, and flung herself upon it face downwards and lay there whispering to herself over and over again Vardri's name as one whispers a charm.

Would he forget her one of these days and marry someone else? Had it been real, anything of this that she had lived through during these months in Spain? Was she still that same "Arithelli of the Hippodrome" who had come gaily into Barcelona with her ridiculous dresses and her belief in herself

and her career? She had known an hour of love and passion, and that had been worth all the rest. Emile had always told her that people were not meant to be happy long *ici-bas*. She must pay now for her hour. The gods were angry and must have a sacrifice.

After she had been out in Barcelona only a week, Emile had taken her to one of the gambling-hells of the place, where the lights and mirrors and gilding hurt her tired eyes, and the croupiers called incessantly through the strained silence, "*Le jeu est fait. Rien ne vas plus!*"

It was like that with her now, "*Le jeu est fait.*" How that sentence beat in her brain! She wondered if she were becoming delirious. Then she was on her feet, and her hand went to the Browning pistol at her belt. Sobrenski's figure had appeared at the top of the ladder. He was shading his eyes with his hand, and peering forward into the gloom. Only one of them there! The girl or Vardri, which was it?

Then the whole place was in darkness, for Arithelli had overturned and extinguished the solitary lamp. The excited whinny of a horse mingled with the sound of two shots fired in rapid succession, a rustling noise among the hay, a groan, and silence. Before he set foot on the ladder Sobrenski shouted

to the rest of the conspirators to bring a light. He did not wait to look at the prone figure, but made straight for the door. His business it was first to see whether his quarry were still in sight.

All the other men were hustling each other in a hasty descent. "*Que diable!*!" one of them said. "What is it now? A spy?"

The man who had lowered Arithelli from the window of the house in the Calle de Pescadores, made his way first to where Arithelli lay and stood beside her. He could only see dimly the outline of a figure which might have been either that of a man or woman. "Bring a light here," Valdez called impatiently. "Which of them is it?" Though he was a revolutionist he was still a human being, and he had always been as sorry for her as he had dared allow himself to be, and he hoped it was not the girl. Another man came up carrying a lantern, and flashed the light on what rested motionless at their feet. Arithelli lay on her face as she had fallen. Her hair streamed over her shoulders and mingled with the dark folds of the cloak. The hand that still held the pistol was flung wide.

"It's not Vardri," the other man said. "Is it—?" Sobrenski cut across the question. "A traitor," he said. "What does it matter about the name? Get back all of you and see to the horses.

There should be two of them and there's only one here. We've got to find the other one."

With a sudden brusque movement Valdez knelt down, turned the limp body over, and rested the head upon his knee. "*Pardieu!*" he ejaculated as he let it fall gently back. "It's Fatalité!"

THE END



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